ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

Edited by
MARGHERITA O. OSBORNE

Illustrated by
BEN KUTCHER

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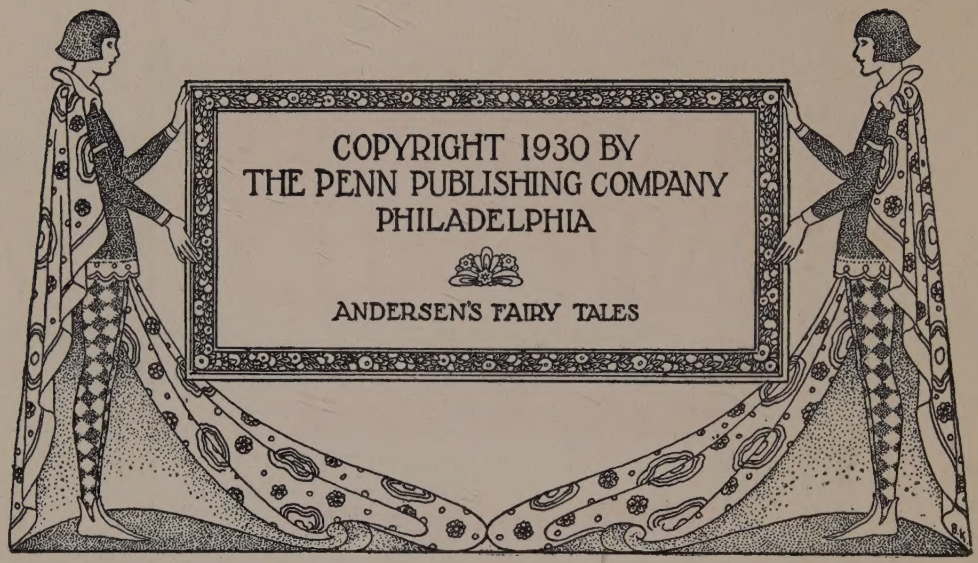

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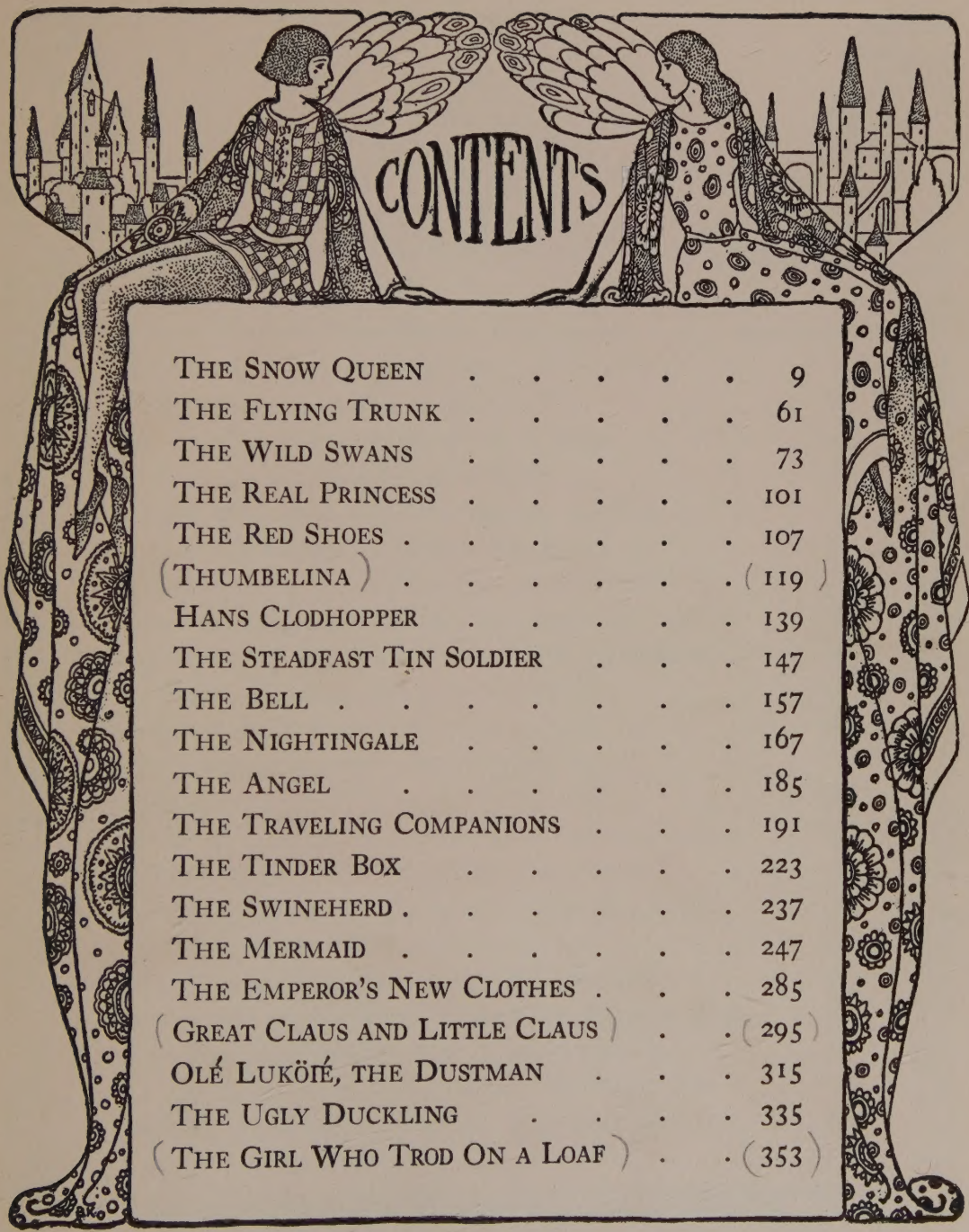
FOREWORD

ALL of Andersen's best loved tales and many not so well-known, but equally beautiful, are included in this collection.

The stories of Hans Christian Andersen have a remarkably varied appeal; nothing could be more pleasing to small boys and girls, nor to their parents, than the tales of *Thumbelina* and *The Ugly Duckling*. *The Mermaid* is a perfect love story. *What the Moon Saw* is for those who have seen enough of life to wonder at its enigmas. The shades of sadness that appear in some of the stories are colored by a golden light of faith; the delicate humorous tones cleverly depict Andersen's understanding of human nature.

Andersen's genius combined the realistic with the romantic; often he added a touch of mysticism, which gave his work a quality rarely attained by others who wrote for "Children of all ages." Whether they are homely, sad, or humorous, all of his stories have the faculty of stimulating the reader to wonder.

MARGHERITA OSBORNE.



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The Snow Queen

THE SNOW QUEEN

A Tale in Seven Stories

FIRST STORY

THIS is about a mirror and its fragments. Now we are about to begin and when we get to the end of the story, you will know more than you do now about a very wicked hobgoblin. He was one of the worst kind; in fact he was a real demon. One day, he was in a high state of delight because he had invented a mirror with this peculiarity, that every good and pretty thing reflected in it shrank away to almost nothing. On the other hand, every bad and good-for-nothing thing stood out and looked its worst. The most beautiful landscapes reflected in it looked like boiled spinach, and the best people became hideous, or else they were upside down and had no bodies. Their faces were distorted beyond recognition, and if they had even one freckle it appeared to spread all over the nose and mouth. The demon thought this im-

mensely amusing. If a good thought passed through anyone's mind, it turned to a grin in the mirror, and this caused real delight to the demon. All the scholars in the demon's school, for he kept a school, reported that a miracle had taken place. Now for the first time it had become possible to see what the world and mankind were really like. They ran about all over with the mirror, till at last there was not a country or person which had not been seen in this distorting mirror. They even wanted to fly up to heaven with it to mock the angels; but the higher they flew, the more it grinned, so much so that they could hardly hold it, and at last it slipped out of their hands and fell to earth, shivered into hundreds of millions and billions of bits. Even then it did more harm than ever. Some of these bits were not as big as a grain of sand, and these flew about all over the world, getting into people's eyes, and, once in, they stuck there, and distorted everything they looked at, or made them see everything that was amiss. Each tiniest grain of glass kept the same power as that possessed by the whole mirror. Some people even got a bit of glass into their hearts, and that was terrible, for the heart became like a lump of ice. Some of the fragments were so big that they were used for window panes, but it was not advisable to look at one's friends through these panes. Other bits were made into spectacles, and it was a bad

business when people put on these spectacles meaning to be just. The bad demon laughed till he split his sides; it tickled him to see the mischief he had done. But some of these fragments were still left floating about the world, and you shall hear what happened to them.

SECOND STORY

ABOUT A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL

In a big town crowded with houses and people, where there is no room for gardens, people have to be content with flowers in pots instead. In one of these towns lived two children who managed to have something bigger than a flower pot for a garden. They were not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of each other as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other in two attic rooms. The roof of one house just touched the roof of the next one, with only a rain water gutter between them. They each had a little dormer window, and one only had to step over the gutter to get from one house to the other. Each of the parents had a large window-box, in which they grew pot herbs and a little rose tree. There was one in each box, and they both grew splendidly. It occurred to the parents to put the boxes across the gutter, from house to house, and they looked just

like two banks of flowers. The pea vines hung down over the edges of the boxes, and the roses threw out long creepers which twined round the windows. It was almost like a green triumphal arch. The boxes were high, and the children knew they must not climb up on to them, but they were often allowed to have their little stools out under the rose trees, and there they had delightful games. Of course in the winter there was an end to these amusements. The windows were often covered with hoar frost. They would warm coppers on the stove and stick them on the frozen panes, where they made lovely peep-holes as round as possible. Then a bright eye would peep through these holes, one from each window. The little boy's name was Kay, and the little girl's Gerda.

In the summer they could reach each other with one bound, but in the winter they had to go down all the stairs in one house and up all the stairs in the other, and outside there were snow-drifts.

"Look! the white bees are swarming," said the old grandmother.

"Have they a queen bee, too?" asked the little boy, for he knew that there was a queen among the real bees.

"Yes, indeed they have," said the grandmother. "She flies where the swarm is thickest. She is the biggest of them all, and she never remains on the ground. She always flies up again to the sky.

"THE SNOW QUEEN IS THE BIGGEST OF THEM ALL"

Many a winter's night she flies through the streets and peeps in at the windows, and then the ice freezes on the panes into wonderful patterns like flowers."

"Oh yes, we have seen that," said both children, and then they knew it was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Just let her come," said the boy, "and I will put her on the stove, where she will melt."

But the grandmother smoothed his hair and told him more stories.

In the evening when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept up on the chair by the window, and peeped out of the little hole. A few snowflakes were falling, and one of these, the biggest, remained on the edge of the window-box. It grew bigger and bigger, till it became the figure of a woman, dressed in the finest white gauze, which appeared to be made of millions of starry flakes. She was delicately lovely, but all ice, glittering, dazzling ice. Still she was alive, her eyes shone like two bright stars, but there was no rest or peace in them. She nodded to the window and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down off the chair, and then he fancied that a big bird flew past the window.

The next day was bright and frosty, and then came the thaw—and after that the spring. The sun

shone, green buds began to appear, the swallows built their nests, and people began to open their windows. The little children began to play in their garden on the roof again. The roses were in splendid bloom that summer; the little girl had learned a hymn, and there was something in it about roses, and that made her think of her own. She sang it to the little boy, and then he sang it with her —

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we Thee hail!"

The children took each other by the hands, kissed the roses, and rejoiced in God's bright sunshine, and spoke to it as if the Child Jesus were there. What lovely summer days they were, and how delightful it was to sit out under the fresh rose trees, which seemed never tired of blooming.

Kay and Gerda were looking at a picture book of birds and animals, one day—it had just struck five by the church clock—when Kay said, "Oh, something struck my heart, and I have got something in my eye!"

The little girl put her arms round his neck, he blinked his eye, there was nothing to be seen.

"I believe it is gone," he said. But it was not gone. It was one of those very grains of glass from the mirror, the magic mirror. You remember that horrid mirror, in which all good and great things

"I HAVE GOT SOMETHING IN MY EYE"

reflected in it became small and mean, while the bad things were magnified, and every flaw became very apparent.

Poor Kay! a grain of it had gone straight to his heart, and would soon turn it to a lump of ice. He did not feel it any more, but it was still there.

"Why do you cry?" he asked; "it makes you look ugly; there's nothing the matter with me. How horrid!" he suddenly cried; "there's a worm in that rose, and that one is quite crooked; after all,

they are nasty roses, and so are the boxes they are growing in!" He kicked the box and broke off two of the roses.

"What are you doing, Kay?" cried the little girl. When he saw her alarm, he broke off another rose, and then ran in, by his own window, and left the dear little Gerda alone.

When she next got out the picture book, he said it was only fit for babies in long clothes. When his grandmother told them stories, he always had a but —, and if he could manage it, he liked to get behind her chair, put on her spectacles and imitate her. He did it very well and people laughed at him. He was soon able to imitate every one in the street; he could make fun of all their peculiarities and failings. "He will turn out a clever fellow," said people. But it was all that bit of glass in his heart, that bit of glass in his eye, and it made him tease little Gerda, who was so devoted to him. He played quite different games now; he seemed to have grown older. One winter's day, when the snow was falling fast, he brought in a big magnifying glass; he held out the tail of his blue coat, and let the snowflakes fall upon it.

"Now look through the glass, Gerda!" he said; every snowflake was magnified, and looked like a lovely flower, or a sharply pointed star.

"Do you see how cleverly they are made," said Kay. "Much more interesting than looking at

real flowers, and there is not a single flaw in them, they are perfect, if only they would not melt."

Shortly after, he appeared in his thick gloves, with his sledge on his back. He shouted right into Gerda's ear, "I have got leave to drive in the big square where the other boys play!" and away he went.

In the big square the bolder boys used to tie their little sledges to the farm carts and go a long way in this fashion. They had no end of fun over it. Just in the middle of their games, a big sledge came along; it was painted white and the occupant wore a white fur coat and cap. The sledge drove twice around the square, and Kay quickly tied his sledge on behind. Then off they went, faster, and faster, into the next street. The driver turned round and nodded to Kay in the most friendly way, just as if they knew each other. Every time Kay wanted to loose his sledge, the person nodded again, and Kay stayed where he was, and they drove right out through the town gates. Then the snow began to fall so heavily, that the little boy could not see a hand before him as they rushed along. He undid the cords and tried to get away from the big sledge, but it was no use, his little sledge stuck fast, and on they rushed, faster than the wind. He shouted aloud but nobody heard him and the sledge tore on through the snow-drifts. Every now and then it gave a bound, as if they were jumping over hedges

and ditches. He was very much frightened, and he wanted to say his prayers, but he could only remember the multiplication tables.

The snowflakes grew bigger and bigger till at last they looked like big white chickens. All at once they sprang on one side, the big sledge stopped and the person who drove got up, coat and cap smothered in snow. It was a tall and upright lady, all shining white,—the Snow Queen herself.

"We have come along at a good pace," she said; "but it's cold enough to kill one; creep inside my bearskin coat."

She took him into the sledge by her, wrapped him in her furs, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snow-drift.

"Are you still cold?" she asked, and she kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, it went to his very heart, which was already more than half ice; he felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment, and then it seemed to have done him good, he no longer felt the cold.

"My sledge! don't forget my sledge!" He had almost forgotten it. It was tied to one of the white chickens which flew along behind them. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and then he forgot all about little Gerda, Grandmother, and all the others at home.

"Now I mustn't kiss you any more," she said, "or I should kiss you to death!"

Kay looked at her, she was so pretty; a cleverer, more beautiful face could hardly be imagined. She did not seem to be made of ice, now, as she was outside the window when she had waved her hand to him. In his eyes she was quite perfect, and he was not a bit afraid of her; he told her that he could do mental arithmetic, as far as fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles and the number of inhabitants of the country. She always smiled at him, and he then thought he surely did not know enough and he looked up into the wide expanse of heaven, into which they rose higher and higher as she flew with him on a dark cloud, while the storm surged around them, the wind ringing in their ears like well-known old songs.

They flew over the woods and lakes, over oceans and islands, the cold wind whistled down below them, the wolves howled, the black crows flew screaming over the sparkling snow, but up above, the moon shone bright and clear—and Kay looked at it all the long, long winter nights; in the day he slept at the Snow Queen's feet.

THIRD STORY

THE GARDEN OF THE WOMAN LEARNED IN MAGIC

But how was little Gerda getting on all this long time since Kay left her? She wondered where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could say

anything about him. All that the other boys knew was that they had seen him tie his little sledge to a splendid big one which drove away down the street and out of the town gates. Nobody knew where he was, and many tears were shed; little Gerda cried long and bitterly. At last, people said he was dead; he must have fallen into the river which ran close by the town. Oh, what long, dark, winter days those were!

At last the spring came and the sunshine.

"Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone," she said to the swallows.

"We don't believe it," said the swallows, and at last little Gerda did not believe it, either.

"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning; "those Kay never saw and I will go down to the river and ask it about him!"

It was very early in the morning; she kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on the red shoes and went, quite alone, out by the gate to the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I will give you my red shoes if you will bring him back to me again."

She thought the little ripples nodded in a curious way, so she took off her red shoes, her most cherished possessions, and threw them both into the river. They fell close by the shore, and were car-

ried straight back to her by the little wavelets. It seemed as if the river would not accept her offering, as it had not taken little Kay.

She only thought she had not thrown them far enough, so she climbed into a boat which lay among the rushes, then she went right out to the further end of it, and threw the shoes into the water again. But the boat was loose, and her movements started it off, and it floated away from the shore. She felt it moving and tried to get out, but before she reached the other end the boat was more than a yard from the shore, and was floating away quite quickly.

Little Gerda was terribly frightened, and began to cry, but nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore, but flew alongside, twittering as if to cheer her, "we are here, we are here." The boat floated rapidly away with the current; little Gerda sat quite still with only her stockings on; her little red shoes floated behind, but they could not catch up with the boat which drifted away faster and faster.

The banks on both sides were very pretty with beautiful flowers, fine old trees, and slopes dotted with sheep and cattle, but not a single person did she see.

"Perhaps the river is taking me to little Kay," thought Gerda, and that cheered her. She sat up and looked at the beautiful green banks for hours.

Then they came to a big cherry garden. There was a little house in it, with curious blue and red windows, it had a thatched roof, and two wooden soldiers stood outside, who presented arms as she sailed past. Gerda called out to them. She thought they were alive, but of course they did not answer; she was quite close to them, for the current drove the boat close to the bank. Gerda called out again, louder than before, and then an old, old woman came out of the house; she was leaning upon a big, hooked stick, and she wore a big sun hat, which was covered with beautiful painted flowers.

"You poor little child," said the old woman, "however were you driven out on this big, strong river into the wide, wide world alone?" Then she walked right into the water, and caught hold of the boat with her hooked stick and she drew it ashore, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was delighted to be on dry land again, but she was a little bit frightened of the strange old woman.

"Come, tell me who you are, and how you got here," said she.

When Gerda had told her the whole story and asked her if she had seen Kay, the woman said she had not seen him, but that she expected him. Gerda must not be sad, she was to come and taste her cherries and see her flowers, which were more

beautiful than any picture-book; each one had a story to tell. Then she took Gerda by the hand, they went into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were very high up, and they were red, blue, and yellow; they threw a very curious light into the room. On the table were quantities of the most delicious cherries, of which Gerda had leave to eat as many as ever she liked. While she was eating, the old woman combed Gerda's hair with a golden comb, so that the hair curled, and shone like gold round the pretty little face, which was as sweet as a rose.

"I have long wanted a little girl like you!" said the old woman. "You will see how well we shall get on together." While she combed her hair, Gerda had forgotten all about Kay, for the old woman was learned in the magic art, but she was not a bad witch and only cast spells over people for a little amusement. She wanted to keep Gerda. She therefore went into the garden and waved her hooked stick over all the rose-bushes, and however beautifully they were flowering, all sank down into the rich black earth without leaving a trace behind them. The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would be reminded of Kay, and would want to run away. Then she took Gerda into the flower garden. What a delicious scent there was! and every imaginable flower for every

season was in that lovely garden; no picture-book could be brighter or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees. Then she was put into a lovely bed with rose-colored silken coverings stuffed with violets; she slept and dreamed as lovely dreams as any queen on her wedding day.

The next day she played with the flowers in the garden again—and many days passed in the same way. Gerda knew every flower, but however many there were, she always thought there was one missing, but what it was she did not know.

One day she was sitting, looking at the old woman's sun hat with all its painted flowers, and the very prettiest one of them all was a rose. The old woman had forgotten her hat when she charmed the others away. This is the consequence of being absent-minded.

"What!" said Gerda, "are there no roses here?" and she sprang in among the flower beds and sought. But in vain! Her hot tears fell on the very places where the roses used to be; when the warm drops moistened the earth, the rose trees shot up again, just as full of bloom as when they sank. Gerda embraced the roses and kissed them, and then she thought of the lovely roses at home, and this brought the thought of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been delayed," said the little girl. "I ought to have been looking for Kay!

Don't you know where he is?" she asked the roses. "Do you think he is dead and gone?"

"He is not dead," said the roses. "For we have been down underground, you know, and all the dead people are there, but Kay is not among them."

"Oh, thank you!" said little Gerda, and then she went to the other flowers and looked into their cups and said, "Do you know where Kay is?"

But each flower stood in the sun and dreamed its own dreams. Little Gerda heard many of these, but never anything about Kay.

And what said the Tiger lilies?

"Do you hear the drum? rub-a-dub, it has only two notes, rub-a-dub, always the same. The wailing of women and the cry of the preacher. The Hindu woman in her long red garment stands on the pile, while the flames surround her and her dead husband. But the woman is only thinking of the living man in the circle round, whose eyes burn with a fiercer fire than that of the flames which consume the body. Do the flames of the heart die in the fire?"

"I understand nothing about that," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the Tiger lily.

"What does the convolvulus say?"

"An old castle is perched high over a narrow mountain path, it is closely covered with ivy, almost hiding the old red walls, and creeping up

leaf upon leaf right round the balcony where stands a beautiful maiden. She bends over the balustrade and looks eagerly up the road. No rose on its stem is fresher than she; no apple blossom wafted by the wind moves more lightly. Her silken robes rustle softly as she bends over and says, 'Will he never come?'"

"Is it Kay you mean?" asked Gerda.

"I am only talking about my own story, my dream," answered the convolvulus.

What said the little snowdrop?

"Between two trees a rope with a board is hanging; it is a swing. Two pretty little girls in snowy frocks and green ribbons fluttering on their hats are seated on it. Their brother, who is bigger than they are, stands up behind them; he has his arms round the ropes for supports, and holds in one hand a little bowl and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles. As the swing moves, the bubbles fly upwards in all their changing colors, the last one still hangs from the pipe swayed by the wind, and the swing goes on. A little black dog runs up, he is almost as light as the bubbles, he stands up on his hind legs and wants to be taken into the swing, but it does not stop. The little dog falls with an angry bark; they jeer at it; the bubble bursts. A swinging plank, a fluttering foam picture—that is my story!"

"I daresay what you tell me is very pretty, but

you speak so sadly and you never mention little Kay."

What says the hyacinth?

"They were three beautiful sisters, all most delicate, and quite transparent. One wore a crimson robe, the other a blue, and the third was pure white. These three danced hand-in-hand, by the edge of the lake in the moonlight. They were human beings, not fairies of the wood. The fragrant air attracted them, and they vanished into the wood; here the fragrance was stronger still. Three coffins glide out of the wood towards the lake, and in them lie the maidens. The fireflies flutter lightly round them with their flickering little torches. Do these dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The scent of the flower says that they are corpses. The evening bell tolls their knell."

"You make me quite sad," said little Gerda; "your perfume is so strong it makes me think of those dead maidens. Oh, is little Kay really dead? The roses have been down underground, and they say no."

"Ding, dong," tolled the hyacinth bells; "we are not tolling for little Kay; we know nothing about him. We sing our song, the only one we know."

And Gerda went on to the buttercups shining among their dark green leaves.

"You are a bright little sun," said Gerda. "Tell

me if you know where I shall find my little playfellow."

The buttercup shone brightly and returned Gerda's glance. What song could the buttercup sing? It would not be about Kay.

"God's bright sun shone into a little court on the first day of spring. The sunbeams stole down the neighboring white wall, close to which bloomed the first yellow flower of the season; it shone like burnished gold in the sun. An old woman had brought her armchair out into the sun; her granddaughter, a poor and pretty little maid-servant, had come to pay her a short visit, and she kissed her. There was gold, heart's gold, in the kiss. Gold on the lips, gold on the ground and gold above, in the early morning beams! Now that is my little story," said the buttercup.

"Oh, my poor old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "She will be longing to see me, and grieving about me, as she did about Kay. But I shall soon go home again and take Kay with me. It is useless for me to ask the flowers about him. They only know their own stories, and have no information to give me."

Then she tucked up her little dress, so that she might run the faster, but the narcissus blossoms struck her on the legs as she jumped over them, so she stopped and said, "Perhaps you can tell me something."

She stooped down close to the flower and listened. What did it say?

"I can see myself, I can see myself," said the narcissus. "Oh, how sweet is my scent. Up there in an attic window stands a little dancing girl half dressed; first she stands on one leg, then on the other, and looks as if she would tread the whole world under her feet. She is only a delusion. She pours some water out of a teapot on to a bit of stuff that she is holding; it is her bodice. 'Cleanliness is a good thing,' she says. Her white dress hangs on a peg; it has been washed in the teapot, too, and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron colored scarf round her neck, which makes the dress look whiter. See how high she carries her head, and all upon one stem. I see myself, I see myself!"

"I don't care a bit about all that," said Gerda; "it's no use telling me such stuff."

And then she ran to the end of the garden. The door was fastened, but she pressed the rusty latch, and it gave way. The door swung open, and little Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back three times, but nobody came after her. She ran until she could run no further, and she sat down on a big stone. When she looked round she saw that the summer was over, it was quite late autumn. She would never have known it inside the beautiful garden, where

the sun always shone, and the flowers of every season were always in bloom.

"Oh, how I have wasted my time," said little Gerda. "It is autumn. I must not rest any longer," and she got up to go on.

How weary and sore were her little feet, and everything around looked so cold and dreary. The long willow leaves were quite yellow. The damp mist fell off the trees like rain, one leaf dropped after another from the trees, and only the sloe-thorn still bore its fruit, but the sloes were sour and set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how gray and sad it looked, out in the wide world.

FOURTH STORY

PRINCE AND PRINCESS

Gerda was soon obliged to rest again. A big crow hopped on to the snow, just in front of her. It had been sitting looking at her for a long time and wagging its head. Now it said "Caw, caw; good-day, good-day," as well as it could; it meant to be kind to the little girl, and asked her where she was going, alone in the wide world.

Gerda understood the word "alone" and knew how much there was in it, and she told the crow the whole story of her life and adventures, and asked if it had seen Kay.

The crow nodded his head gravely and said, "Maybe I have, maybe I have."

"What, do you really think you have?" cried the little girl, nearly smothering him with her kisses.

"Gently, gently!" said the crow. "I believe it may have been Kay, but he has forgotten you by this time, I expect, for the princess."

"Does he live with a princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes, listen!" said the crow. "But it is so difficult to speak your language. If you understand 'crow's language,'[1] I can tell you about it much better."

"No, I have never learned it," said Gerda; "but grandmother knew it, and used to speak it. If only I had learned it!"

"It doesn't matter," said the crow. "I will tell you as well as I can, although I may do it rather badly."

Then he told her what he had heard.

"In this kingdom where we are now," said he, "there lives a princess who is very clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world, and forgotten them again, so clever is she. One day, she was sitting on her throne, which is not such an amusing thing to do either, they say, and she began humming a tune, which happened to be

[1] Children have a kind of language, or gibberish, formed by adding letters or syllables to every word, which is called "Crow's language."

'Why should I not be married, oh why?'

'Why not, indeed?' said she. And she made up her mind to marry, if she could find a husband who had an answer ready when a question was put to him. She called all the court ladies together, and when they heard what she wanted, they were delighted.

"'I like that now,' they said. 'I was thinking the same thing myself, the other day.'

"Every word I say is true," said the crow, "for I have a tame sweetheart who goes about the palace whenever she likes. She told me the whole story."

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for "birds of a feather flock together," and one crow always chooses another. The newspapers all came out immediately with their borders of hearts and the princess's initials. They gave notice that any young man who was handsome enough might go to the palace to speak to the princess. The one who spoke as if he were quite at home, and spoke well, would be chosen by the princess as her husband. "Yes, yes, you may believe me, it's as true as that I sit here," said the crow. "The people came crowding in; there was such running, and crushing, but no one was fortunate enough to be chosen, either on the first day, or on the second. They could all of them talk well enough in the

street, but when they entered the castle gates, and saw the guard in silver uniforms, and when they went up the stairs through rows of lackeys in gold embroidered liveries, their courage forsook them. When they reached the brilliantly lighted reception rooms, and stood in front of the throne where the princess was seated, they could think of nothing to say, they only echoed her last words, and of course that was not what she wanted.

"It was just as if they had all taken some kind of sleeping powder, which made them lethargic; they did not recover themselves until they got out into the street again, and then they had plenty to say. There was quite a long line of them, reaching from the town gates up to the palace.

"I went to see them myself," said the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, but they got nothing at the palace, not even as much as a glass of tepid water. Some of the wise ones had taken sandwiches with them, but they did not share them with their neighbors! They thought if the others went in to the princess looking hungry, that there would be more chance for themselves."

"But Kay, little Kay!" asked Gerda; "when did he come? Was he amongst the crowd?"

"Give me time, give me time! We are just coming to him. It was on the third day that a little personage came marching cheerfully along, without either carriage or horse. His eyes sparkled

like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very shabby."

"Oh, that was Kay!" said Gerda gleefully; "then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands.

"He had a little knapsack on his back!" said the crow.

"No, it must have been on his sledge; he had it with him when he went away!" said Gerda.

"It may be so," said the crow; "I did not look very particularly, but I know from my sweetheart, that when he entered the palace gates, and saw the life guards in their silver uniforms, and the lackeys on the stairs in their gold laced liveries, he was not the least bit abashed. He just nodded to them and said, 'It must be very tiresome to stand upon the stairs. I am going inside!' The rooms were blazing with lights. Privy councillors and excellencies without number were walking about barefoot carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make you solemn! His boots creaked fearfully too, but he wasn't a bit upset."

"Oh, I am sure that was Kay!" said Gerda; "I know he had a pair of new boots, I heard them creaking in grandmother's room."

"Yes, indeed they did creak!" said the crow. "But nothing daunted, he went straight up to the princess, who was sitting on a pearl, as big as a spinning wheel. Poor, simple boy! All the court

ladies and their attendants, the courtiers, and their gentlemen, each attended by a page, were standing round. The nearer the door they stood, so much the greater was their haughtiness, till the footman's boy who always wore slippers and stood in the doorway, was almost too proud even to be looked at."

"It must be awful!" said little Gerda, "and yet Kay has won the princess!"

"If I had not been a crow, I should have taken her myself, notwithstanding that I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I could have done myself, when I speak crow-language; at least so my sweetheart says. He was a picture of good looks and gallantry, and then, he had not come with any idea of wooing the princess, but simply to hear her wisdom. He admired her just as much as she admired him!"

"Indeed it was Kay then," said Gerda; "he was so clever he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh, won't you take me to the palace?"

"It's easy enough to talk," said the crow, "but how are we to manage it? I will talk to my tame sweetheart about it. She will have some advice to give us, I daresay, but I am bound to tell you that a little girl like you will never be admitted!"

"Oh, indeed I shall," said Gerda; "when Kay hears that I am here, he will come out at once to fetch me."

"Wait here for me by the stile," said the crow, then he wagged his head and flew off.

The evening had darkened in before he came back. "Caw, caw," he said, "she sends you greeting, and here is a little roll for you. She got it out of the kitchen where there is bread enough, and I daresay you are hungry! It is not possible for you to get into the palace. You have bare feet; the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would never allow you to pass. But don't cry! We shall get you in, somehow; my sweetheart knows a little back staircase which leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where the key is kept."

So they went into the garden, into the great avenue where the leaves were, softly one by one; and when the palace lights went out, one after the other, the crow led little Gerda to the back door, which was ajar.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she was about to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know if this really was little Kay. Oh, it must be he, she thought, picturing to herself his clever eyes and his long hair. She could see his very smile when they used to sit under the rose trees at home. She thought he would be very glad to see her, and to hear what a long way she had come to find him, and to hear how sad they had all been at home

when he did not come back. Oh, it was joy mingled with fear.

They had now reached the stairs, where the little lamp was burning on a shelf. There stood the tame sweetheart, twisting and turning her head to look at Gerda, who made a curtsey, as grandmother had taught her.

" My betrothed has spoken so charmingly to me about you, my little miss! " she said. " Your life, '*Vita,*' as it is called, is most touching! If you will take the lamp, I will go on in front. We shall take the straight road here, and we shall meet no one."

" It seems to me that someone is coming up behind us," said Gerda, as she fancied something rushed past her throwing a shadow on the walls—horses with flowing manes and slender legs—huntsmen, ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

" Oh, those are only the dreams! " said the crow. " They come to take the thoughts of the noble ladies and gentlemen out hunting. That's a good thing, for you will be able to see them all the better in bed. But don't forget, when you are taken into favor, that you show a grateful spirit."

" Now, there's no need to talk about that," said the crow from the woods.

They now came into the first apartment; it was hung with rose-colored satin embroidered with flowers. Here again the dreams overtook them, but they flitted by so quickly that Gerda could not

distinguish them. The apartments became one more beautiful than the other; they were enough to bewilder anybody. They now reached the bedroom. The ceiling was like a great palm with crystal leaves, and in the middle of the room were two beds, each like a lily hung from a golden stem. One was white, and in it lay the princess; the other was red, and there lay he whom Gerda had come to seek—little Kay! She bent aside one of the crimson leaves, and she saw a little brown neck. It was Kay! She called his name aloud, and held the lamp close to him. Again the dreams rushed through the room on horseback—he awoke, turned his head—and it was not little Kay.

It was only the prince's neck which was like Kay's, but he was young and handsome. The princess peeped out of her lily-white bed, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried and told them all her story, and what the crows had done to help her.

"You poor little thing!" said the prince and princess. And they praised the crows, and said that they were not at all angry with them, but they must not do it again. Then they gave them a reward.

"Would you like your liberty?" said the princess, "or would you prefer permanent posts about the court as court crows with perquisites from the kitchen?"

Both crows curtsied and begged for the permanent posts, for they thought of their old age, and said " It was so good to have something for the old man," as they called it.

The prince got up and allowed Gerda to sleep in his bed, and he could not have done more. She folded her little hands, and thought " How good the people and the animals are;" then she shut her eyes and fell fast asleep. All the dreams came flying back again; this time they looked like angels, and they were dragging a little sledge with Kay sitting on it, and he nodded. But it was only a dream; so it all vanished when she woke.

Next day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot; they asked her to stay at the palace and have a good time, but she only begged them to give her a little carriage and horse, and a little pair of boots, so that she might drive out into the wide world to look for Kay.

They gave her a pair of boots and a muff and she was beautifully dressed, and when she was ready to start, there before the door stood a new chariot of pure gold. The prince's and princess's coat-of-arms was emblazoned on it, and shone like a star. Coachman, footman, and outrider, for there was even an outrider, all wore golden crowns. The prince and princess themselves helped her into the carriage and wished her joy. The wood crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the

first three miles. He sat beside Gerda for he could not ride with his back to the horses and the other crow stood at the door and flapped her wings. She did not go with them, for she suffered from headache since she had been a kitchen pensioner—the consequence of eating too much. The chariot was stored with sugar biscuits and there were fruit and ginger nuts under the seat. "Good-by, good-by," cried the prince and princess; little Gerda wept and the crow wept, too. At the end of the first few miles the crow said good-by, and this was the hardest parting of all. It flew up into a tree and flapped its big black wings as long as it could see the chariot which shone like the brightest sunshine.

FIFTH STORY

THE LITTLE ROBBER GIRL

They drove on through a dark wood, where the chariot lighted up the way and blinded the robbers by its glare; it was more than they could bear.

"It is gold, it is gold!" they cried, and darting forward, seized the horses, and killed the postillions, the coachman and footman. Then they dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat, and she is pretty. She has been fattened on nuts!" said the old robber woman, who had a long beard and eyebrows that hung

down over her eyes. "She is as good as a fat lamb, and how nice she will taste!" She drew out her sharp knife as she said this; it glittered horribly. "Oh!" screamed the old woman at the same moment, for her little daughter had come up behind her, and she was biting her ear. She hung on her back, as wild and as savage a little animal as you could wish to find. "You bad, wicked child!" said the mother, but she was prevented from killing Gerda on this occasion.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber girl. "She shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and she shall sleep in my bed." Then she bit her mother again and made her dance. All the robbers laughed and said, "Look at her dancing with her cub!"

"I want to get into the carriage," said the little robber girl, and she always had her own way because she was so spoilt and stubborn. She and Gerda got into the carriage and then they drove over stubble and stones further and further into the wood. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but much stronger; she had broader shoulders, and darker skin, her eyes were quite black, with almost a melancholy expression. She put her arm around Gerda's waist and said:

"They sha'n't kill you as long as I don't get angry with you; you must surely be a princess!"

"No," said little Gerda, and then she told her

all her adventures, and how fond she was of Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, gave a little nod, and said, "They sha'n't kill you, even if I am angry with you! I will do it myself." Then she dried Gerda's eyes, and stuck her own hands into the pretty muff, which was so soft and warm.

At last the chariot stopped; they were in the courtyard of a robbers' castle, the walls of which were cracked from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew in and out of every hole, and big bulldogs, which each looked ready to devour somebody, jumped about as high as they could, but they did not bark, for it was not allowed. A big fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor of the smoky old hall. The smoke all went up to the ceiling where it had to find a way out for itself. Soup was boiling in a big cauldron over the fire, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spits.

"You shall sleep with me and all my little pets to-night," said the robber girl.

When they had had something to eat and drink they went along to one corner which was spread with straw and rugs. There were nearly a hundred pigeons roosting overhead on the rafters and beams. They seemed to be asleep, but they fluttered about a little when the children came in.

"They are all mine," said the little robber girl, seizing one of the nearest. She held it by the legs

and shook it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it," she cried, dashing it at Gerda's face. "Those are the wood pigeons," she added, pointing to some laths fixed across a big hole high up on the walls. "They are a regular rabble; they would fly away directly if they were not locked in. And here is my old sweetheart Be," dragging forward a reindeer by the horn. It was tied up, and it had a bright copper ring round its neck. "We have to keep him close, too, or he would run off. Every single night I tickle his neck with my bright knife, he is so frightened of it." The little girl produced a long knife out of a hole in the wall and drew it across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal laughed and kicked, and the robber girl laughed and pulled Gerda down into the bed with her.

"Do you have that knife by you while you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking rather frightened.

"I always sleep with a knife," said the little robber girl. "You never know what will happen. But now tell me again what you told me before about little Kay, and why you went out into the world." So Gerda told her all about it again, and the wood pigeons cooed up in their cage above them; the other pigeons were asleep. The little robber girl put her arm around Gerda's neck and went to sleep with the knife in her other hand, and she was soon snoring. But Gerda would not close

her eyes; she did not know whether she was to live or to die. The robbers sat round the fire, eating and drinking, and the old woman was turning somersaults. This sight terrified the poor little girl. Then the wood pigeons said, "Coo, coo, we have seen little Kay. His sledge was drawn by a white chicken and he was sitting in the Snow Queen's sledge; it was floating low down over the trees, while we were in our nest. She blew upon us young ones, and they all died except we two; coo, coo."

"What are you saying up there?" asked Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was most likely going to Lapland, because there is always snow and ice there! Ask the reindeer who is tied up there."

"There is ice and snow, and it's a splendid place," said the reindeer. "You can run and jump about where you like on those big glittering plains. The Snow Queen has her summer tent there, but her permanent castle is up at the North Pole, on the island which is called Spitzbergen!"

"Oh, Kay, little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still, or I shall stick the knife into you!" said the robber girl.

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite solemn, but she nodded her head and said,

"No matter, no matter! Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I," said the animal, its eyes dancing. "I was born and brought up there, and I used to leap about on the snow-fields."

"Listen," said the robber girl. "You see that all our men folks are away, but mother is still here, and she will stay, but later on in the morning she will take a drink out of the big bottle there, and after that she will have a nap—then I will do something for you." Then she jumped out of bed, ran along to her mother and pulled her beard, and said, "Good-morning, my own dear nanny-goat!" And her mother filliped her nose till it was red and blue; but it was all affection.

As soon as her mother had had her draught from the bottle and had dropped asleep, the little robber girl went along to the reindeer, and said, "I should have the greatest pleasure in the world in keeping you here, to tickle you with my knife, because you are such fun then, however, it does not matter. I will untie your halter and help you outside so that you may run away to Lapland, but you must put your best foot foremost, and take this little girl for me to the Snow Queen's palace, where her playfellow is. I have no doubt you heard what she was telling me, for she spoke loud enough, and you are generally eavesdropping!"

The reindeer jumped into the air for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda up, and had the forethought to tie her on, nay, even to give her a little cushion to sit upon. "Here, after all, I will give you your fur boots back, for it will be very cold, but I will keep your muff, it is too pretty to part with. Still you sha'n't be cold. Here are my mother's big mittens for you, they will reach up to your elbows; here, stick your hands in! Now your hands look just like my nasty mother's!"

Gerda shed tears of joy.

"I don't like you to whimper!" said the little robber girl. "You ought to be looking delighted! And here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you sha'n't starve."

These things were tied on to the back of the reindeer. The little robber girl opened the door, called in all the big dogs, and then she cut the halter with her knife, and said to the reindeer, "Now run, but take care of my little girl!"

Gerda stretched out her hands in the big mittens to the robber girl and said good-by, and then the reindeer darted off over briars and bushes, through the big wood, over swamps and plains, as fast as it could go. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed, while the red lights quivered up in the sky.

"There are my old northern lights," said the reindeer. "See how they flash!" and on it rushed

faster than ever, day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham, too, and then they were in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

THE LAPP WOMAN AND THE FINN WOMAN

They stopped by a little hut, a very poverty-stricken one; the roof sloped right down to the ground, and the door was so low that the people had to creep on hands and knees when they wanted to go in or out. There was nobody at home here but an old Lapp woman, who was frying fish over a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her all Gerda's story, but it told its own first; for it thought it was much the most important. Gerda was so overcome by the cold that she could not speak at all.

"Oh, you poor creature!" said the Lapp woman; "you've got a long way to go yet; you will have to go hundreds of miles into Finmark, for the Snow Queen is paying a country visit there, and she burns blue lights, every night. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper. I will give it to you to take to the Finn woman up there. She will be better able to direct you than I can."

So when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk something, the Lapp woman wrote a few

words on a dried stock-fish and gave it to her, bidding her take good care of it. Then she tied her on the reindeer again, and off they flew. Flicker, flicker, went the beautiful blue northern lights up in the sky all night long;—at last they came to Finmark, and knocked on the Finn woman's chimney, for she had no door at all.

There was such a heat inside that the Finn woman went almost naked; she was little and very grubby. She at once loosened Gerda's things, and took off the mittens and the boots, or she would have been too hot. Then she put a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and after that she read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times, and then she knew it by heart, and put the fish into the pot for dinner; there was no reason why it should not be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

Again the reindeer told his own story first, and then little Gerda's. The Finn woman blinked with her wise eyes, but she said nothing.

"You are so clever," said the reindeer. "I know you can bind all the winds of the world with a bit of sewing cotton. When a skipper unties one knot, he gets a good wind, when he unties two, it blows hard, and if he undoes the third and the fourth he brings a storm about his head wild enough to blow down the forest trees. Won't you give the little girl a drink, so that she may have the

strength of twelve men to overcome the Snow Queen?"

"The strength of twelve men," said the Finn woman. "Yes, that will be about enough."

She went along to a shelf and took down a big folded skin, which she unrolled. There were curious characters written on it, and the Finn woman read till the perspiration poured down her forehead.

But the reindeer again implored her to give Gerda something, and Gerda looked at her with such beseeching eyes, full of tears, that the Finn woman began blinking again, and drew the reindeer along into a corner, where she whispered to it, at the same time putting fresh ice on its head.

"Little Kay is certainly with the Snow Queen, and he is delighted with everything there. He thinks it is the best place in the world, but that is because he has got a splinter of glass in his heart and a grain of glass in his eye. They will have to come out first, or he will never be human again, and the Snow Queen will keep him in her power!"

"But can't you give little Gerda something to take which will give her power to conquer it all?"

"I can't give her greater power than she already has. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how both man and beast have to serve her? How she has got on as well as she has on her bare

feet? We must not tell her what power she has; it is in her heart, because she is such a sweet, innocent child. If she can't reach the Snow Queen herself, then we can't help her. The Snow Queen's gardens begin just two miles from here. You can carry the little girl as far as that. Put her down by the big bush standing there in the snow covered with red berries. Don't stand gossiping, but hurry back to me!" Then the Finn woman lifted Gerda on to the reindeer's back, and it rushed off as fast as it could.

"Oh, I have not got my boots, and I have not got my mittens!" cried little Gerda.

She soon felt the want of them in that cutting wind, but the reindeer did not dare to stop. It ran on till it came to the bush with the red berries. There it put Gerda down, and kissed her on the mouth, while big shining tears trickled down its face. Then it ran back again as fast as ever it could. There stood poor little Gerda, without shoes or gloves, in the middle of freezing icebound Finmark.

She ran forward as quickly as she could. A whole regiment of snowflakes came towards her; they did not fall from the sky, for it was quite clear, with the northern lights shining brightly. No; these snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the bigger they grew. Gerda remembered well how big and ingenious they looked

under the magnifying glass. But the size of these was monstrous, they were alive; they were the Snow Queen's advanced guard, and they took the most curious shapes. Some looked like big, horrid porcupines, some like bundles of knotted snakes with their heads sticking out. Others, again, were like fat little bears with bristling hair, but all were dazzling white, living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda said the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so great that her breath froze as it came out of her mouth, and she could see it like a cloud of smoke in front of her. It grew thicker and thicker, till it formed itself into bright little angels who grew bigger and bigger, when they touched the ground. They all wore helmets and carried shields and spears in their hands. More and more of them appeared, and when Gerda had finished her prayer she was surrounded by a whole legion. They pierced the snowflakes with their spears and shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda walked fearlessly and undauntedly through them. The angels touched her hands and her feet, and then she hardly felt how cold it was, but walked quickly on towards the Palace of the Snow Queen.

Now we must see what Kay was about. He was not thinking about Gerda at all, least of all that she was just outside the Palace.

SEVENTH STORY

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE AND AFTERWARDS

The Palace walls were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of the biting winds. There were over a hundred rooms in it, shaped just as the snow had drifted. The biggest one stretched for many miles. They were all lighted by the strongest northern lights. All the rooms were immensely big and empty, and glittering in their iciness. There was never any gaiety in them; not even so much as a ball for the little bears, when the storms might have turned up as the orchestra, and the polar bears might have walked about on their hind legs and shown off their grand manners. There was never even a little game-playing party, for such games as " touch last " or " the biter bit " —no, not even a little gossip over the coffee cups for the white fox-girls. Immense, vast, and cold were the Snow Queen's halls. The northern lights came and went with such regularity that you could count the seconds between their coming and going. In the midst of these never-ending snow-halls was a frozen lake. It was broken up on the surface into a thousand bits, but each was so exactly like the others that the whole formed a perfect work of

KAY AND GERDA WALKED ON, HAND IN HAND

art. The Snow Queen sat in the very middle of it when she sat at home. She then said that she was sitting on "The Mirror of Reason," and that it was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was blue with cold, nay, almost black; but he did not know it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away the icy shiverings, and his heart was little better than a lump of ice. He went about dragging some sharp, flat pieces of ice, which he placed in all sorts of patterns, trying to make something out of them; just like the little tablets of wood, with which we make patterns, and call them a "Chinese puzzle."

Kay's patterns were most ingenious, because they were the "Ice puzzles of Reason." In his eyes they were first-rate and of the greatest importance. This was because of the grain of glass still in his eye. He made many patterns forming words, but he could never find out the right way to place them for one particular word, a word he was most anxious to make. It was "Eternity." The Snow Queen had said to him that if he could find out this word he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates. But he could not discover it.

"Now I am going to fly away to the warm countries," said the Snow Queen. "I want to go and peep into the black cauldrons!" She meant the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius by this. "I must

whiten them a little; it does them good, and the lemons and the grapes, too!" And away she flew.

Kay sat quite alone in all those many miles of empty ice halls. He looked at his bits of ice, and thought and thought, till something gave way within him. He sat so stiff and immovable that one might have thought he was frozen to death.

Then it was that little Gerda walked into the Palace, through the great gates in a biting wind. She said her evening prayer, and the wind dropped as if lulled to sleep, and she walked on into the big empty hall. She saw Kay, and knew him at once. She flung her arms round his neck, held him fast, and cried, "Kay, little Kay, have I found you at last?"

But he sat still, rigid and cold.

Then little Gerda shed hot tears; they fell upon his breast and penetrated to his heart. Here they thawed the lump of ice, and melted the little bit of the mirror which was in it. He looked at her, and she sang:

> "Where roses deck the flowery vale,
> There, Infant Jesus, we Thee hail!"

Then Kay burst into tears. He cried so much that the grain of glass was washed out of his eye. He knew her, and shouted with joy, "Gerda, dear little Gerda! Where have you been for such a long time? And where have I been?"

He looked round and said, "How cold it is here; how empty and vast!" He kept tight hold of Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy. Their happiness was so heavenly that even the bits of ice danced for joy around them; and when they settled down, there they lay! just in the very position the Snow Queen had told Kay he must find out, if he was to become his own master and have the whole world and a new pair of skates.

Gerda kissed his cheeks and they grew rosy, she kissed his eyes and they shone like hers, she kissed his hands and his feet, and he became well and strong. The Snow Queen might come home whenever she liked. His order of release was written there in shining letters of ice.

They took hold of each other's hands and wandered out of the big Palace. They talked about grandmother, and about the roses upon the roof. Wherever they went, the wind lay still and the sun broke through the clouds. When they reached the bush with the red berries, they found the reindeer waiting for them, and he had brought another young reindeer with him, whose udders were full. The children drank her warm milk and kissed her on the mouth. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finn woman, in whose heated hut they warmed themselves and received directions about the homeward journey. Then they went on to the Lapp woman. She had made new clothes for

them and prepared her sledge. Both the reindeer ran by their side, to the boundaries of the country. Here the first green buds appeared, and they said "Good-by" to the reindeer and the Lapp woman. They heard the first little birds twittering and saw the buds in the forest. Out of it came riding a young girl on a beautiful horse, which Gerda knew, for it had drawn the golden chariot. She had a scarlet cap on her head and pistols in her belt; it was the little robber girl, who was tired of being at home. She was riding northward to see how she liked it before she tried some other part of the world. She knew them again, and Gerda recognized her with delight.

"You are a nice fellow to go tramping off!" she said to little Kay. "I should like to know if you deserve to have somebody running to the end of the world for your sake!"

But Gerda patted her cheek and asked about the Prince and Princess.

"They are traveling in foreign countries," said the robber girl.

"But the crow?" asked Gerda.

"Oh, the crow is dead!" she answered. "The tame sweetheart is a widow, and goes about with a bit of black wool tied round her leg. She pities herself bitterly, but it's all nonsense! But tell me how you got on, yourself, and where you found him."

Gerda and Kay both told her all about it.

" Snip, snap, snurre, it's all right at last then!" she said, and she took hold of their hands and promised that, if she ever passed through their town, she would pay them a visit. Then she rode off into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda walked on, hand in hand, and wherever they went, they found the most delightful spring and blooming flowers. Soon they recognized the big town where they lived, with its tall towers, in which the bells still rang their merry peals. They went straight on to the grandmother's door, up the stairs and into her room. Everything was just as they had left it, and the old clock ticked in the corner, and the hands pointed to the time. As they went through the door into the room they perceived that they were grown up. The roses clustered round the open window, and there stood their two little chairs. Kay and Gerda sat down upon them, still holding each other by the hand. All the cold empty grandeur of the Snow Queen's palace had passed from their memory like a bad dream. Grandmother sat in God's warm sunshine reading from her Bible.

" Without ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes and then all at once the meaning of the old hymn came to them.

"Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we Thee hail!"

And there they both sat, grown up and yet children, children at heart; and it was summer—warm, beautiful summer.

The Flying Trunk

THE FLYING TRUNK

THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he might have paved the whole street, and a little alley besides, with silver money. But he didn't do it. He knew better how to use his money than that. If he laid out a penny, he got half a crown in return, such a clever man of business was he—but at last he died.

His son got all the money, and he led a merry life. He used to go to masquerades every night, make kites of bank notes, and play ducks and drakes with gold coins instead of stones. In this way the money soon went. At last he had only a penny left, and no clothes except an old dressing-gown and a pair of slippers. His friends cared for him no longer, they would not be seen about the streets with him; but one of them who was kind sent him an old trunk, and said, " Pack up." Now this was all very well, but he had nothing to pack, so he got into the trunk himself.

It was a most peculiar trunk. If you pressed the lock the trunk could fly, and the merchant's son

did just that. With a whiz the trunk flew up the chimney, high above the clouds, further and further away. The bottom of it creaked ominously, and he was dreadfully afraid it would go to pieces, and a fine fall he would have had! Heaven preserve us!

At last he arrived in the country of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under the dead leaves, and walked into the town; he could do that without being conspicuous, as all the Turks wear dressing-gowns and slippers, you know. He met a nurse with a baby. "I say, you Turkish nurse," said he, "what is that big palace close to the town, where all the windows are so high up?"

"That's where the king's daughter lives," said she; "it has been prophesied that she will be made very unhappy by a lover, so no one is allowed to visit her except when the king and the queen go with them."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son, and he went back to the wood and got into his trunk again, and flew on to the roof of the palace, from whence he crept in at the princess's window.

She was lying on a sofa, fast asleep. She was so very beautiful that the merchant's son had to kiss her. She woke up and was dreadfully frightened, but he said that he was the Prophet of the Turks and he had flown down through the air to see her, and that pleased her very much.

They sat side by side and he told her stories about her eyes. He said they were like the most beautiful deep, dark lakes, in which her thoughts floated like mermaids; and then he told her about her forehead, that it was like a snow mountain, adorned with a series of pictures. And he told her all about the storks, who bring beautiful little children up out of the rivers. No end of beautiful stories he told her, and then he asked her to marry him, and she at once said "Yes." "But you must come here on Saturday," she said, " when the king and the queen drink tea with me. They will be very proud when they hear I am to marry a prophet. But mind you have a splendid story to tell them, for my parents are very fond of stories: my mother likes them to be grand and very proper, but my father likes them to be merry, so that he can laugh at them."

" Well, a story will be my only wedding-gift!" he said, and then they separated. But the princess gave him a sword encrusted with gold; it was the kind of present he needed badly.

He flew away and bought himself a new dressing-gown, and sat down in the wood to make up a new story; it had to be ready by Saturday, and it is not always so easy to make up a story.

However he had it ready in time, and Saturday came.

The king, the queen and the whole court were

waiting for him round the princess's tea-table. He had a charming reception.

"Now will you tell us a story," said the queen, "one which is both thoughtful and instructive."

"But one that we can laugh at, too," said the king.

"All right!" said he, and then he began. We must listen to his story attentively.

"There was once a bundle of matches, and they were frightfully proud because of their high origin. Their family tree, that is to say the great pine tree of which they were each a little splinter, had been the giant of the forest. The matches now lay on a shelf between a tinder box and an old iron pot, and they told the whole story of their youth to these two. 'Ah, when we were a living tree,' said they, 'we were indeed a green branch! Every morning and every evening we had diamond-tea, that was the dew-drops. In the day we had the sunshine, and all the little birds to tell us stories. We could see, too, that we were very rich, for most of the other trees were only clad in summer, but our family could afford to have green clothes both summer and winter. But then the wood-cutters came, and there was a great revolution, and our family was sundered. The head of the tribe got a place as mainmast on a splendid ship, which could sail round the world if it chose; the other branches were scattered in different directions, and it is now

HE FLEW UP INTO THE AIR WITH THEM

our task to give light to the common herd, that is how such aristocratic people as ourselves have got into this kitchen.'

"'Now my lot has been different!' said the iron pot, beside which the matches lay. 'Ever since I came into the world I have passed the time in being scoured and boiled, over and over again! Everything solid comes to me, and in fact I am the most important person in the house. My best time is when dinner is over, and I can lie clean and bright on the shelf, and have a sensible chat with my companions; but with the exception of the water-bucket, which sometimes goes down into the yard, we lead an indoor life. Our only newsmonger is the market-basket, and it talks very wildly about the Government and the People. Why the other day an old pot was so alarmed by the conversation, that it fell down and broke itself to pieces! It was a Liberal you see!'

"'You are talking too much,' said the tinder box, and the steel struck sparks on the flint. 'Let us have a merry evening.'

"'Yes, pray let us settle which is the most aristocratic among us,' said the matches.

"'No, I don't like talking about myself,' said the earthen pipkin! 'Let us have an evening of entertainment! I will begin. I will tell you the kind of things we have all experienced: By the eastern sea and the Danish beaches ——'

SHE SAT ALL DAY ON THE ROOF WAITING FOR HIM

"'That's a nice beginning to make!' said all the plates; 'I am sure that will be a story I shall like!'

"'Well, I passed my youth there, in a very quiet family; the furniture was bees-waxed, the floors washed, and clean curtains were put up once a fortnight!'

"'What a good story-teller you are,' said the broom; 'one can tell directly that it's a woman telling a story, a vein of cleanliness runs through it!'

"'Yes, one feels that,' said the water-pail, and for very joy it gave a little hop which clashed on the floor.

"The pipkin went on with its story, and the end was much the same as the beginning.

"All the plates clattered with joy, and the broom crowned the pipkin with a wreath of parsley, because it knew it would annoy the others, and it

thought, 'If I crown her to-day, she will crown me to-morrow.'

"'Now I will dance,' said the tongs, and began to dance; Heaven help us! how high into the air she could get her leg. The old chair-cover in the corner burst when she saw it! 'Mayn't I be crowned too,' said the tongs, so they crowned her.

"'They're only a rabble after all,' said the matches.

"The tea-urn was called upon to sing now, but it had a cold, it said; it couldn't sing except when it was boiling; but that was all because it was stuck-up; it wouldn't sing except when it was on the drawing-room table.

"There was an old quill pen, on the window-sill, which the servant used to write with; there was nothing extraordinary about it, except that it had been dipped too far into the inkpot, but it was rather proud of that. 'Never mind if the tea-urn won't sing,' it said. 'There is a nightingale hanging outside in a cage; it can sing; it certainly hasn't learned anything special, but we needn't mind that to-night.'

"'I think it is most unsuitable,' said the kettle, which was the kitchen songster, and half-sister of the urn, 'that anyone should listen to a strange bird like that! Is it patriotic? I will let the market-basket judge.'

"'I am very much annoyed,' said the market-

basket. 'I am more annoyed than anyone can tell! Is this a suitable way to spend an evening? Wouldn't it be better to put the house to rights? Then everything would find its proper place. I would manage the whole party, then we should get on differently!'

"'Yes, let us make a row!' they all said together.

"At that moment the door opened, it was the servant; they all stood still, and nobody uttered a sound. But there was not a pot among them that didn't know its capabilities, or how distinguished it was. 'If I had chosen, we might have had a merry evening, and no mistake,' they all thought.

"The servant took the matches and struck a light. How they spluttered and blazed up!

"'Now everyone can see,' they thought, 'that we are the first. How brilliantly we shine! What a light we shed around!' And then they were burned out.

"That was a splendid story," said the queen; "I quite felt that I was in the kitchen with the matches. Yes, indeed you shall marry our daughter."

"Certainly!" said the king. "Thou shalt marry her on Monday!" They said "du" (thou) to him now, as they were to be related.

So the wedding was decided upon, and the evening before the town was illuminated. Buns and cakes were scattered broadcast; the street boys

stood on tiptoe and shouted hurrah, and whistled through their fingers. Everything was most gorgeous.

"I suppose I shall have to do something, too," said the merchant's son. So he bought a lot of rockets, squibs, and all sorts of fireworks, put them in his trunk, and flew up into the air with them.

All the Turks jumped at the sight, so that their slippers flew up into the air, for they had never seen a flight of meteors like that before. They believed that now without doubt it was the prophet himself, who was about to marry the princess.

As soon as the merchant's son got down again into the wood with his trunk, he thought, "I will just go into the town to hear what was thought of the display," and it was quite reasonable that he should do so.

Oh, how everyone talked, every single man he spoke to had his own opinion about it, but that it had been splendid was the universal opinion.

"I saw the prophet, myself," said one; "his eyes were like shining stars, and his beard like foaming water."

"He was wrapped in a mantle of fire," said another. "The most beautiful angel's heads peeped out among the folds." He heard nothing but pleasant things, and the next day was to be his wedding-day.

He went back to the wood to get into his trunk—

but where was it? The trunk was burned up. A spark from the fireworks had set fire to it and the trunk was burned to ashes. He could not fly any more, or reach his bride. She sat all day on the roof waiting for him. She is waiting for him still, but he wanders round the world telling stories, only they are no longer so merry as the one he told about the matches.

The Wild Swans

THE WILD SWANS

FAR away, where the swallows take refuge in winter, lived a king who had eleven sons and one daughter, Elise. The eleven princes used to go to school with stars on their breasts and swords at their sides. They wrote upon golden slates with diamond pencils, and could read just as well without a book as with one, so there was no mistake about their being real princes. Their sister Elise sat upon a little footstool of looking-glass, and she had a picture-book which had cost the half of a kingdom. Oh, these children were very happy, but it was not to last thus forever.

Their father, who was king over all the land, married a wicked queen who was not at all kind to the poor children; they found that out on the first day. All was festive at the castle, but when the children wanted to play at having company, instead of giving them as many cakes and baked apples as ever they wanted, she would only let them have some sand in a teacup, and said they must make-believe.

In the following week she sent little Elise into the country to board with some peasants, and it did not take her long to make the king believe so many bad things about the boys, that he cared no more about them.

"Fly out into the world and look after yourselves," said the wicked queen; "you shall fly about like birds without voices."

But she could not make things as bad for them as she would have liked; they turned into eleven beautiful wild swans. They flew out of the palace window with a weird scream, right across the park and the woods.

It was very early in the morning when they came to the place where their sister Elise was sleeping in the peasant's house. They hovered over the roof of the house, turning and twisting their long necks, and flapping their wings, but no one either heard or saw them. They had to fly away again, and they soared up towards the clouds, far out into the wide world, and settled in a big, dark wood, which stretched down to the shore.

Poor little Elise stood in the peasant's room, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other toys. She made a little hole in it, which she looked through at the sun, and it seemed to her as if she saw her brothers' bright eyes. Every time the warm sunbeams shone upon her cheek, it reminded her of their kisses. One day passed just like an-

other. When the wind whistled through the rose-hedges outside the house, it whispered to the roses, "Who can be prettier than you are?" But the roses shook their heads and answered, "Elise!" And when the old woman sat in the doorway reading her Psalms, the wind turned over the leaves and said to the book, "Who can be more pious than you?" "Elise!" answered the book. Both the roses and the book of Psalms only spoke the truth.

She was to go home when she was fifteen, but when the queen saw how pretty she was, she got very angry, and her heart was filled with hatred. She would willingly have turned her into a wild swan, too, like her brothers, but she did not dare to do it at once, for the king wanted to see his daughter. The queen always went to the bath in the early morning. It was built of marble and adorned with soft cushions and beautiful carpets.

She took three toads, kissed them, and said to the first, "Sit upon Elise's head when she comes to the bath, so that she may become sluggish like yourself." "Sit upon her forehead," she said to the second, "that she may become ugly like you, and then her father won't know her! Rest upon her heart," she whispered to the third. "Let an evil spirit come over her, which may be a burden to her." Then she put the toads into the clean water, and a green tinge immediately came over it. She

called Elise, undressed her, and made her go into the bath; when she ducked under the water, one of the toads got among her hair, the other got on to her forehead, and the third on to her bosom. But when she stood up three scarlet poppies floated on the water; had not the creatures been poisonous, and kissed by the sorceress, they would have been changed into crimson roses, but yet they became flowers from merely having rested a moment on her head and her heart. She was far too good and innocent for the sorcery to have any power over her. When the wicked queen saw this, she rubbed her over with walnut juice, and smeared her face with some evil-smelling salve. She also matted up her beautiful hair; it would have been impossible to recognize pretty Elise. When her father saw her, he was quite horrified and said that she could not be his daughter. Nobody would have anything to say to her, except the yard dog, and the swallows, and they were only poor dumb animals whose opinion went for nothing.

Poor Elise wept, and thought of her eleven brothers who were all lost. She crept sadly out of the palace and wandered about all day, over meadows and marshes, and into a big forest. She did not know in the least where she wanted to go, but she felt very sad, and longed for her brothers, who had, no doubt, been driven out of the palace like herself. She made up her mind to go and look

for them, but she had only been in the wood for a short time when night fell. She had quite lost her way, so she lay down upon the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and rested her head on a little hillock. It was very still and the air was mild, hundreds of glow-worms shone around her on the grass and in the marsh like green fire. When she gently moved one of the branches over her head, the little shining insects fell over her like a shower of stars. She dreamed about her brothers all night long. Again they were children playing together: they wrote upon the golden slates with their diamond pencils, and she looked at the picture-book which had cost half a kingdom. But they no longer wrote strokes and noughts upon their slates as they used to do; no, they wrote down all their boldest exploits, and everything that they had seen and experienced. Everything in the picture-book was alive, the birds sang, and the people walked out of the book, and spoke to Elise and her brothers. When she turned over a page, they skipped back into their places again, so that there should be no confusion among the pictures.

When she woke the sun was already high; it is true she could not see it very well through the thick branches of the lofty forest trees, but the sunbeams cast a golden shimmer around beyond the forest. There was a fresh delicious scent of grass and herbs in the air, and the birds were almost ready to

perch upon her shoulders. She could hear the splashing of water, for there were many springs around, which all flowed into a pond with a lovely sandy bottom. It was surrounded with thick bushes, but there was one place which the stags had trampled down and Elise passed through the opening to the water side. It was so transparent, that had not the branches been moved by the breeze, she must have thought that they were painted on the bottom, so plainly was every leaf reflected, both those on which the sun played, and those which were in shade.

When she saw her own face she was quite frightened, it was so brown and ugly, but when she wet her little hand and rubbed her eyes and forehead, her white skin shone through again. Then she took off all her clothes and went into the fresh water. A more beautiful royal child than she could not be found in all the world.

When she had put on her clothes again, and plaited her long hair, she went to a sparkling spring and drank some of the water out of the hollow of her hand. Then she wandered further into the wood, though where she was going she had not the least idea. She thought of her brothers, and she thought of a merciful God who would not forsake her. He let the wild crab-apples grow to feed the hungry. He showed her a tree, the branches of which were bending beneath their weight of fruit.

Here she made her midday meal, and, having put props under the branches, she walked on into the thickest part of the forest. It was so quiet that she heard her own footsteps, she heard every little withered leaf which bent under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, not a ray of sunlight pierced the leafy branches, and the tall trunks were so close together that when she looked before her it seemed as if a thick fence of heavy beams hemmed her in on every side. The solitude was such as she had never known before.

It was a very dark night, not a single glow-worm sparkled in the marsh; sadly she lay down to sleep, and it seemed to her as if the branches above her parted asunder, and the Saviour looked down upon her with His loving eyes, and little angel's heads peeped out above His head and under His arms.

When she woke in the morning she was not sure if she had dreamed this, or whether it was really true.

She walked a little further, and met an old woman with a basket full of berries, of which she gave her some. Elise asked if she had seen eleven princes ride through the wood. "No," said the old woman, "but yesterday I saw eleven swans, with golden crowns upon their heads, swimming in the stream close by here."

She led Elise a little further to a slope, at the foot of which the stream meandered. The trees on

either bank stretched out their rich leafy branches towards each other, and where they could not reach each other, they had torn their roots out of the ground, and leaned over the water so as to interlace their branches.

Elise said good-by to the old woman, and walked along by the river till it flowed out into the great open sea.

The beautiful open sea lay before the maiden, but not a sail was to be seen on it, not a single boat. How was she ever to get any further? She looked at the numberless little pebbles on the beach; they were all worn quite round by the water. Glass, iron, stone, whatever was washed up, had taken their shapes from the water, which yet was much softer than her little hand. "With all its rolling, it is untiring, and everything hard is smoothed down. I will be just as untiring! Thank you for your lesson, you clear rolling waves! Some time, so my heart tells me, you will bear me to my beloved brothers!"

Eleven white swans' feathers were lying on the seaweed; she picked them up and made a bunch of them. There were still drops of water on them. Whether these were dew or tears no one could tell. It was very lonely there by the shore, but she did not feel it, for the sea was ever-changing. There were more changes on it in the course of a few hours than could be seen on an inland fresh-water

lake in a year. If a big black cloud arose, it was just as if the sea wanted to say, "I can look black too," and then the wind blew up and the waves showed their white crests. But if the clouds were red and the wind dropped, the sea looked like a rose-leaf, now white, now green. But, however still it was, there was always a little gentle motion just by the shore, the water rose and fell softly like the bosom of a sleeping child.

When the sun was just about to go down, Elise saw eleven wild swans with golden crowns upon their heads flying towards the shore. They flew in a swaying line, one behind the other, like a white ribbon streamer. Elise climbed up on to the bank and hid beneath a bush; the swans settled close by her and flapped their great white wings.

As soon as the sun had sunk beneath the water the swans shed their feathers and became eleven handsome princes; they were Elise's brothers. Although they had altered a good deal, she knew them at once; she felt that they must be her brothers and she sprang into their arms, calling them by name. They were delighted when they recognized their little sister who had grown so big and beautiful. They laughed and cried, and told each other how wickedly their stepmother had treated them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "have to fly about in the guise of swans, as long as the sun is

above the horizon. When it goes down we regain our human shapes. So we always have to look out for a resting place near sunset, for should we happen to be flying up among the clouds when the sun goes down, we should be hurled to the depths below. We do not live here; there is another land, just as beautiful as this, beyond the sea; but the way to it is very long and we have to cross the mighty ocean to get to it. There is not a single island on the way where we can spend the night, only one solitary little rock juts up above the water midway. It is only just big enough for us to stand upon close together, and if there is a heavy sea the water splashes over us, yet we thank our God for it. We stay there over night in our human forms, and without it we could never revisit our beloved Fatherland, for our flight takes two of the longest days in the year. We are only permitted to visit the home of our fathers once a year, and we dare only stay for eleven days. We hover over this big forest from whence we catch a glimpse of the palace where we were born, and where our father lives; beyond it we can see the high church towers where our mother is buried. We fancy that the trees and bushes here are related to us; and the wild horses gallop over the moors, as we used to see them in our childhood. The charcoal burners still sing the old songs we used to dance to when we were children. This is our Fatherland, we are

drawn towards it, and here we have found you again, dear little sister! We may stay here two days longer, and then we must fly away again across the ocean, to a lovely country indeed, but it is not our own dear Fatherland! How shall we ever take you with us, we have neither ship nor boat!"

"How can I deliver you!" said their sister, and they went on talking to each other, nearly all night, they only dozed for a few hours.

Elise was awakened in the morning by the rustling of the swans' wings above her; her brothers were again transformed and were wheeling round in great circles, till she lost sight of them in the distance. One of them, the youngest, stayed behind. He laid his head against her bosom, and she caressed it with her fingers. They remained together all day; towards evening the others came back, and as soon as the sun went down they took their natural forms.

"To-morrow we must fly away, and we dare not come back for a whole year, but we can't leave you like this! Have you courage to go with us? My arm is strong enough to carry you over the forest, so surely our united strength ought to be sufficient to bear you across the ocean."

"Oh yes! take me with you," said Elise.

They spent the whole night in weaving a kind of net of the elastic bark of the willow bound to-

gether with tough rushes; they made it both large and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun rose and the brothers became swans again, they took up the net in their bills and flew high up among the clouds with their precious sister, who was fast asleep. The sunbeams fell straight on to her face, so one of the swans flew over her head so that its broad wings should shade her.

They were far from land when Elise woke; she thought she must still be dreaming, it seemed so strange to be carried through the air so high up above the sea. By her side lay a branch of beautiful ripe berries, and a bundle of savory roots, which her youngest brother had collected for her, and for which she gave him a grateful smile. She knew it was he who flew above her head shading her from the sun. They were so high up that the first ship they saw looked like a gull floating on the water. A great cloud came up behind them like a mountain, and Elise saw the shadow of herself on it, and those of the eleven swans looking like giants. It was a more beautiful picture than any she had ever seen before, but as the sun rose higher, the cloud fell behind, and the shadow picture disappeared.

They flew on and on all day like an arrow whizzing through the air, but they went slower than usual, for now they had their sister to carry. A storm came up, and night was drawing on; Elise

saw the sun sinking with terror in her heart, for the solitary rock was nowhere to be seen. The swans seemed to be taking stronger strokes than ever; alas! she was the cause of their not being able to get on faster; as soon as the sun went down they would become men, and they would all be hurled into the sea and drowned. She prayed to God from the bottom of her heart, but still no rock was to be seen! Black clouds gathered, and strong gusts of wind announced a storm; the clouds looked like a great threatening leaden wave, and the flashes of lightning followed each other rapidly.

The sun was now at the edge of the sea. Elise's heart quaked, when suddenly the swans shot downwards so suddenly, that she thought they were falling, then they hovered again. Half of the sun was below the horizon, and there for the first time she saw the little rock below, which did not look bigger than the head of a seal above the water. The sun sank very quickly, it was no bigger than a star, but her foot touched solid earth. The sun went out like the last sparks of a bit of burning paper; she saw her brothers stand arm in arm around her, but there was only just room enough for them. The waves beat upon the rock and washed over them like drenching rain. The heavens shone with continuous fire, and the thunder rolled, peal upon peal. But the sister and brothers

held each other's hands and sang a psalm which gave them comfort and courage.

The air was pure and still at dawn. As soon as the run rose the swans flew off with Elise, away from the islet. The sea still ran high, it looked from where they were as if the white foam on the dark green water were millions of swans floating on the waves.

When the sun rose higher, Elise saw before her half floating in the air great masses of ice, with shining glaciers on the heights. A palace was perched midway, a mile in length, with one bold colonnade built above another. Beneath them swayed palm trees and gorgeous blossoms as big as mill wheels. She asked if this was the land to which she was going, but the swans shook their head, because what she saw was a mirage; the beautiful and ever changing palace of Fata Morgana. No mortal dared enter it. Elise gazed at it, but as she gazed the palace, gardens and mountains melted away, and in their place stood twenty proud churches with their high towers and pointed windows. She seemed to hear the notes of the organ, but it was the sea she heard. When she got close to the seeming churches, they changed to a great navy sailing beneath her; but it was only a sea mist floating over the waters. Yes, she saw constant changes passing before her eyes, and now she saw the real land she was bound to. Beautiful

AT LAST HER YOUNGEST BROTHER HAD FOUND HER

blue mountains rose before her with their cedar woods and palaces. Long before the sun went down, she sat among the hills in front of a big cave covered with delicate green creepers. It looked like a piece of embroidery.

"Now we shall see what you will dream here to-night," said the youngest brother, as he showed her where she was to sleep.

"If only I might dream how I could deliver you," she said, and this thought filled her mind entirely. She prayed earnestly to God for His help, and even in her sleep she continued her prayer. It seemed to her that she was flying up to Fata Morgana in her castle in the air. The fairy came towards her, she was charming and brilliant, and yet she was very like the old woman who gave her the berries in the wood, and told her about the swans with the golden crowns.

"Your brothers can be delivered," she said, "but have you courage and endurance enough for it? The sea is indeed softer than your hands, and it molds the hardest stones, but it does not feel the pain your fingers will feel. It has no heart, and does not suffer the pain and anguish you must feel. Do you see this stinging nettle I hold in my hand? Many of this kind grow round the cave where you sleep; only these and the ones which grow in the churchyards may be used. Mark that! Those you may pluck although they will burn and blister

your hands. Crush the nettles with your feet and you will have flax, and of this you must weave eleven coats of mail with long sleeves. Throw these over the eleven wild swans and the charm is broken! But remember that from the moment you begin this work, till it is finished, even if it takes years, you must not utter a word! The first word you say will fall like a murderer's dagger into the hearts of your brothers. Their lives hang on your tongue. Mark this well!"

She touched her hand at the same moment, it was like burning fire, and woke Elise. It was bright daylight, and close to where she slept lay a nettle like those in her dream. She fell upon her knees with thanks to God and left the cave to begin her work.

She seized the horrid nettles with her delicate hands, and they burned like fire; great blisters rose on her hands and arms, but she suffered it willingly if only it would deliver her beloved brothers. She crushed every nettle with her bare feet, and twisted it into green flax.

When the sun went down and the brothers came back, they were alarmed at finding her mute; they thought it was some new witchcraft exercised by their wicked stepmother. But when they saw her hands, they understood that it was for their sakes; the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears

fell, she felt no more pain, and the blisters disappeared.

She spent the whole night at her work, for she could not rest till she had delivered her dear brothers. All the following day while her brothers were away she sat solitary, but never had the time flown so fast. One coat of mail was finished and she began the next. Then a hunting-horn sounded among the mountains. The sound came nearer, and she heard dogs barking. In terror she rushed into the cave and tied the nettles she had collected and woven, into a bundle upon which she sat.

A big dog bounded forward from the thicket, and another and another, they barked loudly and ran backwards and forwards. In a few minutes all the huntsmen were standing outside the cave, and the handsomest of them was the king of the country. He stepped up to Elise. Never had he seen so lovely a girl.

"How came you here, beautiful child?" he said.

Elise shook her head; she dared not speak; the salvation and the lives of her brothers depended upon her silence. She hid her hands under her apron, so that the king should not see what she suffered.

"Come with me!" he said; "you cannot stay here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silks and velvets, put a golden

crown upon your head, and you shall live with me and have your home in my richest palace!" When he lifted her upon his horse, she wept and wrung her hands, but the king said, "I only think of your happiness; you will thank me one day for what I am doing!" Then he darted off across the mountains, holding her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen followed.

When the sun went down, the royal city with churches and cupolas lay before them, and the king led her into the palace, where great fountains played in the marble halls, and where walls and ceilings were adorned with paintings, but she had no eyes for them, she only wept and sorrowed; passively she allowed the women to dress her in royal robes, to twist pearls into her hair, and to draw gloves on to her blistered hands.

She was dazzlingly lovely as she stood there in all her magnificence. The courtiers bent low before her, and the king wooed her as his bride, although the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that he feared the beautiful wood maiden was a witch, who had dazzled their eyes and infatuated the king.

The king refused to listen to him, he ordered the music to play, the richest food to be brought, and the loveliest girls to dance before her. She was led through scented gardens into gorgeous apartments, but nothing brought a smile to her lips, or

into her eyes; sorrow sat there like a heritage and a possession for all time. Last of all, the king opened the door of a little chamber close by the room where she was to sleep. It was adorned with costly green carpets, and made to resemble exactly the cave where he had found her. On the floor lay the bundle of flax she had spun from the nettles, and from the ceiling hung the shirt of mail which was already finished. One of the huntsmen had brought all these things away as curiosities.

" Here you may dream that you are back in your former home! " said the king. " Here is the work upon which you were engaged; in the midst of your splendor, it may amuse you to think of those times."

When Elise saw all these things so dear to her heart, a smile for the first time played upon her lips, and the blood rushed back to her cheeks. She thought of the deliverance of her brothers, and she kissed the king's hand; he pressed her to his heart, and ordered all the church bells to ring marriage peals. The lovely dumb girl from the woods was to be queen of the country.

Th archbishop whispered evil words into the ear of the king, but they did not reach his heart. The wedding was to take place, and the archbishop himself had to put the crown upon her head. In his anger he pressed the golden circlet so tightly upon her head as to give her pain. But a heavier

circlet pressed upon her heart, her grief for her brothers, so she thought nothing of the bodily pain. Her lips were sealed, for a single word from her mouth would cost her brothers their lives, but her eyes were full of love for the good and handsome king, who did everything he could to please her. Every day she grew more and more attached to him, and longed to confide in him, tell him her sufferings; but dumb she must remain, and in silence must bring her labor to completion. Therefore at night she stole away from his side into her secret chamber, which was decorated like a cave, and here she knitted one shirt after another. When she came to the seventh, all her flax was worked up. She knew that these nettles which she must use grew in the churchyard, and that she had to pluck them herself. How was she to get there? "Oh, what is the pain of my fingers compared with the anguish of my heart," she thought. "I must venture out, but the good God will not desert me!" With as much terror in her heart, as if she were doing some evil deed, she stole down one night into the moonlit garden, and through the long alleys out into the silent streets to the churchyard. There she saw, sitting on a gravestone, a group of hideous ghouls, who took off their tattered garments, as if they were about to bathe, and then they dug down into the freshly-made graves with their skinny fingers, and tore the flesh from the bodies

and devoured it. Elise had to pass close by them, and they fixed their evil eyes upon her, but she said a prayer as she passed, picked the stinging nettles and hurried back to the palace with them.

Only one person saw her, but that was the archbishop, who watched while others slept. Surely now all his bad opinions of the queen were justified. All was not as it should be with her. She must be a witch, and therefore she had bewitched the king and all the people.

He told the king in the confessional what he had seen and what he feared. When those bad words passed his lips, the pictures of the saints shook their heads as if to say: " It is not so, Elise is innocent." The archbishop however took it differently, and thought that they were bearing witness against her, and shaking their heads at her sin. Two big tears rolled down the king's cheeks, and he went home with doubt in his heart. He pretended to sleep at night, but no quiet sleep came to his eyes. He perceived how Elise got up and went to her private closet. Day by day his face grew darker. Elise saw it but could not imagine what was the cause of it. It alarmed her, and added to the suffering in her heart because of her brothers. Her salt tears ran down upon the royal purple velvet and lay upon it like sparkling diamonds, and all who saw their splendor wished to be queen.

She had, however, almost reached the end of her

labors, only one shirt of mail was wanting, but again she had no more flax and not a single nettle was left. Once more, for the last time, she must go to the churchyard to pluck a few handfuls. She thought with dread of the solitary walk and the horrible ghouls, but her will was as strong as her trust in God.

Elise went, but the king and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear within the grated gateway of the churchyard. When they followed, they saw the ghouls sitting on the gravestone as Elise had seen them before; and the king turned away his head because he thought she was among them,—she, whose head this very evening had rested on his breast.

"The people must judge her," he groaned.

And the people judged. "Let her be consumed in the glowing flames!"

She was led away from her beautiful royal apartments to a dark damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through the grated window. Instead of velvet and silk they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered to lay her head upon. The hard burning shirts of mail were to be her covering, but they could have given her nothing more precious.

She set to work again with many prayers to God. Outside her prison the street boys sang derisive songs about her, and not a soul comforted her with a kind word.

Towards evening, she heard the rustle of swans' wings close to her window; it was her youngest brother, who had searched for her everywhere and at last had found her. He sobbed aloud with joy although he knew that the coming night might be her last. But her work was almost done and her brothers were there.

The archbishop came to spend her last hours with her as he had promised the king. She shook her head at him, and by looks and gestures begged him to leave her. She had only this night in which to finish her work, or else all would be wasted—all her pain, tears and sleepless nights. The archbishop went away with bitter words against her, but poor Elise knew that she was innocent, and she went on with her work.

The little mice ran about the floor bringing nettles to her feet, so as to give what help they could, and a thrush sat on the grating of the window and sang all night, as merrily as he could to keep up her courage.

It was still only dawn, and an hour before sunrise when the eleven brothers stood at the gate of the palace, begging to be taken to the king. This could not be done, was the answer, for it was still night; the king was asleep and no one dared wake him. All their entreaties and threats were useless, the watch turned out and even the king himself came to see what was the matter; but just then the

sun rose, and no more brothers were to be seen, only eleven wild swans hovering over the palace.

The whole populace streamed out of the town gates, all anxious to see the witch burnt. A miserable horse drew the cart in which Elise was seated. They had put upon her a smock of green sacking, and all her beautiful long hair hung loose from the lovely head. Her cheeks were deathly pale, and her lips moved softly, while her fingers unceasingly twisted the green yarn. Even on the way to her death she could not abandon her unfinished work. Ten shirts lay completed at her feet—she labored away at the eleventh, amid the scoffing insults of the populace.

"Look! How the witch mutters! She has never a book of psalms in her hands, no, there she sits with her loathsome sorcery. Tear it away from her, into a thousand bits!"

The crowd pressed around her to destroy her work, but just then eleven white swans flew down and perched upon the cart flapping their wings. The crowd gave way before them in terror.

"It is a sign from Heaven! She is innocent!" they whispered, but they dared not say it aloud.

The executioner seized her by the hand, but she hastily threw the eleven shirts over the swans, who were immediately transformed to eleven handsome princes; only the youngest had a swan's wing in place of an arm, for one sleeve was wanting to his

shirt of mail, which she had not been able to finish.

"Now I may speak! I am innocent."

The populace who saw what had happened bowed down before her as if she had been a saint, but she sank lifeless in her brother's arms; so great had been the strain, the terror and the suffering she had endured.

"Yes, innocent she is indeed," said the eldest brother, and he told them all that had happened.

Whilst he spoke a wonderful fragrance spread around, as of millions of roses. Every fagot in the pile had taken root and shot out branches, and a great high hedge of red roses had arisen. At the very top was one pure white blossom, it shone like a star, and the king broke it off and laid it on Elise's bosom, and she awoke with joy and peace in her heart.

All the church bells began to ring of their own accord, and the singing birds flocked around them. Surely such a bridal procession went back to the palace as no king had ever seen before!

The Real Princess

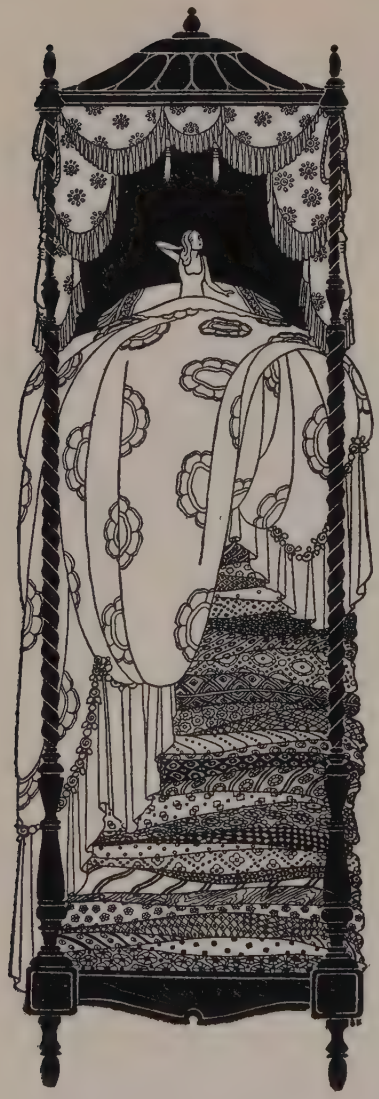
THE REAL PRINCESS

THERE was once a prince, and he wanted to marry a princess, but she must be a real princess. He traveled right round the world to find one, but there was always something wrong. There were plenty of princesses, but whether they were real princesses he couldn't make sure for there was always something not quite right about them. So at last he had to come home again, and he was very sad because he wanted a real princess so badly.

One evening there was a terrible storm; with thunder and lightning and the rain pouring down in torrents; it was a fearful night.

In the middle of the storm somebody knocked at the town gate, and the old king himself went to open it.

It was a princess who stood outside, but she was in a terrible state from the rain and the storm. The water streamed out of her hair and her clothes, it ran in at the top of her shoes and out at the heel, but she said that she was a real princess.



"I SEEMED TO BE LYING UPON SOME HARD THING"

"Well we shall soon see if that is true," thought the old queen, but she did not say so. She went into the bedroom where the princess was to sleep and took all the bedclothes off, then she laid a pea on the bedstead and took twenty mattresses and piled them on the top of the pea, and then twenty feather beds on the top of the mattresses. In the morning they asked the princess how she had slept.

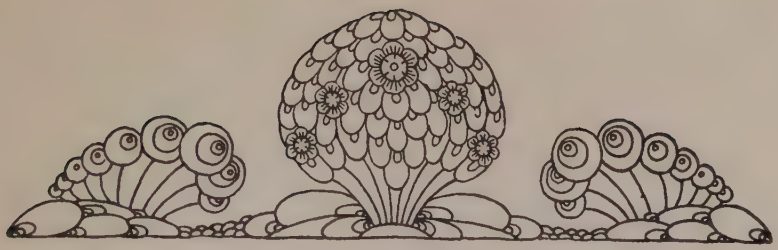
"Oh terribly badly!" said the princess. "I have hardly closed my eyes the whole night! Heaven knows what was in the bed. I seemed to be lying upon some hard thing, and my whole body is black and blue this morning. It is terrible!"

They at once saw that she must be a real princess since she had felt the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds. Nobody but a real princess could have such a delicate skin.

So the prince took her to be his wife, for now he was sure that he had found a real princess, and the pea was put into a Museum, where it may still be seen if no one has stolen it.

Now this is a true story.

The Red Shoes



THE RED SHOES

THERE was once a tiny, delicate little girl, who was so poor that she always had to go about barefoot in summer. In winter she only had a pair of heavy wooden shoes, which chafed her ankles terribly.

An old mother shoemaker who lived in the middle of the village, made a pair of little shoes out of some strips of red cloth. They were very clumsy, but she made them out of pity, for the little girl whose name was Karen.

These shoes were given to her, and she wore them for the first time on the day her mother was buried; they were certainly not mourning, but she had no others, and so she walked barelegged in them behind the poor pine coffin.

A big old carriage happened to drive by, and a big old lady was seated in it; she looked at the little girl, and felt very, very sorry for her, and said to the parson, " Give the little girl to me and I will look after her and be kind to her." Karen thought

it was all because of the red shoes, but the old lady said they were hideous, and had them burned. Karen was well and neatly dressed. She had to learn reading and sewing. People said she was pretty, but her mirror said, "You are more than pretty, you are lovely."

One day the queen passed through that part of the country; she had her little daughter the princess with her. Karen, with many other people, crowded round the palace where they were staying, to see them. The little princess appeared at a window. She wore neither a train nor a golden crown, but she was dressed all in white with a beautiful pair of red morocco shoes. They were not at all like those the poor old mother shoemaker had made for Karen. She had never seen anything as beautiful as these red shoes.

The time came when Karen was old enough to be confirmed; she had new clothes, and she was to have a pair of new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town was to take the measure of her little foot; his shop was full of glass cases of the loveliest shoes and boots. They looked tempting, but the old lady could not see very well, so it gave her no pleasure to look at them. Among all the other shoes there was one pair of red shoes like those worn by the princess. Oh, how pretty they were! The shoemaker told them that they had been made for an earl's daughter, but they had not fitted. "I

suppose they are patent leather," said the old lady, " they are so shiny."

" Yes, indeed, they do shine," said Karen, and she tried them on. They fitted and were bought; but the old lady had not the least idea that they were red. She would never have allowed Karen to wear red shoes for her Confirmation.

Everybody looked at Karen's feet when she walked up the church to the chancel; even the old pictures, those portraits of old priests and their wives, with stiff collars and long black clothes, seemed to fix their eyes upon her shoes. She thought of nothing else when the minister laid his hand upon her head and spoke to her of holy baptism, the covenant of God, and told her that from henceforth she was to be a responsible Christian person. The solemn notes of the organ resounded, the children sang with their sweet voices, the old precentor sang, but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

By the afternoon several persons had told the old lady that the shoes were red, and she told Karen that it was very naughty and most improper. For the future, whenever Karen went to the church she was to wear black shoes, even if they were old. Next Sunday there was Holy Communion. Karen looked at the black shoes and then at the red ones—then she looked again at the red, and at last put them on.

It was beautiful, sunny weather; Karen and the old lady went by the path through the corn-field, which was rather dusty. By the church door stood a lame old soldier. He carried a crutch and he had a curious long beard, it was more red than white, in fact it was almost quite red. He bent down to the ground and asked the old lady if he might dust her shoes. Karen put out her little foot, too. "What beautiful dancing shoes!" said the soldier. "Mind you stick fast when you dance," and as he spoke he struck the soles with his hand. The old lady gave the soldier a copper and went into the church with Karen. All the people in the church looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the portraits looked, too. When Karen knelt at the altar-rails and the chalice was put to her lips, she only thought of the red shoes; she seemed to see them floating before her eyes. She forgot to join in the hymn of praise, and she forgot to say the Lord's Prayer.

When everybody left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage, Karen lifted her foot to get in after her, but the old soldier, who was still standing there, said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!"

Karen couldn't help it; she took a few dancing steps. But when she had begun, her feet kept on dancing. The shoes seemed to have a power over them. She danced right round the church and

couldn't stop; the coachman had to run after her and take hold of her, and lift her into the carriage; but her feet continued to dance, so that she kicked the poor lady horribly. At last they got the shoes off, and her feet had a little rest.

When they got home the shoes were put away in a cupboard, but Karen could not help going to look at them.

The old lady became very ill; she had to be carefully nursed and tended, and no one was nearer than Karen to do this. But there was to be a grand ball in the town, and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, and she looked at the red shoes. She thought there was no harm in doing so and she even put on the red shoes; but then she went to the ball and began to dance!

The shoes would not let her do what she liked: when she wanted to go to the right, they danced to the left: when she wanted to dance up the room, the shoes danced down the room. They danced down the stairs, through the streets and out of the town gate. Away she danced, and away she had to dance, right away into the dark forest. Something shone up above the trees, and she thought it was the moon. But it was the face of the old soldier with the red beard, and he nodded and said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!"

This frightened her terribly and she tried to throw off the red shoes, but they stuck fast. She

tore off her stockings, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet, and off she danced, and off she had to dance over fields and meadows, in rain and sunshine, by day and by night, but at night it was fearful.

She danced into the open churchyard, and she tried to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter wormwood grew, but there was no rest nor repose for her. When she danced towards the open church door, she saw an angel standing there in long white robes; his wings reached from his shoulders to the ground, his face was grave and stern, and in his hand he held a broad and shining sword.

"Dance and dance," said he, "you shall dance in your red shoes till you are pale and cold. You shall dance from door to door, and wherever you find proud vain children, you must knock at the door so that they may see you and fear you."

"Mercy!" shrieked Karen, but she did not hear the angel's answer, for the shoes bore her through the gate into the fields over roadways and paths, ever and ever she was forced to dance.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well; she heard the sound of a hymn from within, and she knew that the old lady was dead, and it seemed to her that she was forsaken by all the world.

On and on she danced; the shoes bore her over

"YOU SHALL DANCE UNTIL YOU ARE PALE AND COLD"

briars and stubble till her feet were torn and bleeding. She danced over the heath till she came to a little lonely house. She knew the executioner lived here, and she tapped with her fingers on the window pane and said,—

"Come out! come out! I can't come in for I am dancing!"

The executioner said, "You can't know who I am! I chop the bad people's heads off, and I see that my ax is quivering."

"Don't chop my head off," said Karen, "for then I can never repent of my sins, but pray, pray chop off my feet with the red shoes!"

Then she confessed all her sins, and the executioner chopped off her feet with the red shoes, and they danced away with the little feet into the depths of the forest.

Then he made her a pair of wooden feet and crutches, and he taught her the psalm, that penitents sing; and she kissed the hand which had wielded the ax, and went away over the heath.

"I have suffered enough for those red shoes!" said she. "I will go to church now, so that they may see me!" and she went as fast as she could to the church door. When she got there, the red shoes danced right up in front of her. She was so frightened that she went home again.

She was very sad all the week, and shed many bitter tears, but when Sunday came, she said,

"Now then, I have suffered and struggled long enough; I should think I am quite as good as many who sit holding their heads so high in church!" She went along quite boldly, but she did not get further than the gate before she saw the red shoes dancing in front of her; she was more frightened than ever, and turned back, this time with real repentance in her heart. Then she went to the parson's house, and begged to be taken into service, she would be very industrious and work as hard as she could, she didn't care what wages they gave her, if only she might have a roof over her head and live among kind people. The parson's wife was sorry for her, and took her into her service. Karen became very industrious and thoughtful. She would sit and listen most attentively in the evening when the parson read the Bible. All the little ones were very fond of her, but when they chattered about finery and dress, and about being as beautiful as a queen, she would shake her head.

On Sunday they all went to church. When they asked her if she would go with them she looked sadly, with tears in her eyes, at her crutches, and they went without her to hear the word of God, while she sat in her little room alone. It was only big enough for a bed and a chair; she sat there with her prayer-book in her hand, and as she read it with a humble mind, she heard the notes of the organ, borne from the church by the wind, and she

raised her tear-stained face and said, "Oh, God help me!"

Then the sun shone brightly round her, and the angel in the white robes whom she had seen on yonder night, at the church door, stood before her. He no longer held the sharp sword in his hand, but a beautiful green branch, covered with roses. He touched the ceiling with it and it rose to a great height, and wherever he touched it a golden star appeared. Then he touched the walls and they spread themselves out, and she saw and heard the organ. She saw the pictures of the old parsons and their wives; the congregation were all sitting in their seats singing aloud—for the church itself had come home to the poor girl, in her narrow little chamber, or else she had been taken to it. She found herself on the bench with the other people from the Parsonage. And when the hymn had come to an end they looked up and said, "It was fine that you came after all, little Karen!"

"It was through God's mercy!" she said. The organ sounded, and the children's voices echoed sweetly through the choir. The warm sunshine streamed brightly in through the window, right up to the bench where Karen sat; her heart was so overfilled with the sunshine, with peace, and with joy, that it broke. Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven, and no one there ever asked about the red shoes.

Thumbelina

THUMBELINA

THERE was once a woman who wished very much to have a little child, and at last she went to a fairy, and said, " I should so very much like to have a little child; can you tell me where I can find one? "

" Oh, that can be easily managed," said the fairy. " Here is a grain of barley different from the kind that grows in the fields and feeds the chickens; plant it in a flower pot and see what will happen."

" Thank you," said the woman, and she gave the fairy twelve pennies, then she went home and planted the barley corn, and immediately there grew up a large handsome flower, something like a tulip, but with its leaves tightly closed as if it were still a bud. " It is a beautiful flower," said the woman, and she kissed the red and golden-colored leaves. While she kissed the flower it opened, and she could see that it was a real tulip. Within the flower, upon the green velvet stamens, sat a very delicate and graceful little maiden. She was scarcely half as long as a thumb, so she was

named "Thumbelina," because she was so small. A walnut-shell, elegantly polished, served her for a cradle; her mattress was made of blue violet-leaves, with a rose-leaf for a counterpane. Here she slept at night, but during the day she amused herself on a table, where the woman had placed a plate full of water. Round this plate were flowers with their stems in the water, and upon it floated a large tulip-petal, which served Thumbelina for a boat. Here the little girl sat and rowed herself from side to side, with two oars made of white horsehair. It really was a very pretty sight. Thumbelina could sing so softly and sweetly that nothing so sweet had ever before been heard.

One night, while she lay in her pretty bed, a large, ugly, wet toad crept through a broken pane of glass in the window, and leaped right upon the table where Thumbelina lay sleeping under her rose-leaf quilt. "What a pretty little wife this would make for my son!" said the toad, and she took up the walnut-shell in which little Thumbelina lay asleep, and jumped through the window with it into the garden.

In the swampy margin of a broad stream in the garden lived the toad, with her son. He was uglier even than his mother, and when he saw the pretty little maiden in her elegant bed, he could only cry, "Coax, Coax, Buk-ke-kex."

"Don't speak so loud, or she will awake," said

the toad, " and then she might run away, for she is as light as swan's down. We will place her on one of the water-lily leaves out in the stream; it will be like an island to her, she is so light and small, and then she cannot escape; and, while she is away, we will make haste and prepare the state-room under the marsh, in which you are to live when you are married."

Far out in the stream grew a number of water-lilies, with broad green leaves, which seemed to float on the top of the water. The largest of these leaves appeared farther off than the rest, and the old toad swam out to it with the walnut-shell, in which little Thumbelina lay still asleep.

The little girl woke very early in the morning, and began to cry bitterly when she found where she was, for she could see nothing but water on every side of the large green leaf, and no way of reaching the land. Meanwhile the old toad was very busy under the marsh, decking her room with rushes and yellow wild flowers, to make it look pretty for her new daughter-in-law. Then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf on which she had placed poor little Thumbelina. She wanted to fetch the pretty bed, to put it in the bridal chamber for her.

The old toad bowed low to her in the water, and said, " Here is my son; he will be your husband,

THE LEAF NOW GLIDED ON MUCH FASTER THAN EVER

and you will live happily together in the marsh by the stream."

"Coax, Coax, Buk-ke-kex," was all her son could say for himself; so the toad took up the elegant little bed, and swam away with it, leaving Thumbelina all alone on the green leaf, where she sat and wept. She could not bear to think of living with the old toad, and having her ugly son for

a husband. The little fishes, who swam about in the water beneath, had seen the toad, and had heard what she said, so they lifted their heads above the water to look at the little maiden. They saw that she was very pretty, and it made them sorry to think that she must go and live with the ugly toads. "No, we must not allow that!" So they assembled in the water, round the green stalk which held the leaf on which the little maiden stood, and gnawed it away at the root with their teeth. Then the leaf floated down the stream, carrying Thumbelina far away, out of reach of land.

Thumbelina sailed past many towns, and the little birds in the bushes saw her, and sang, "What a lovely little creature!" so the leaf swam away with her farther and farther, till it brought her to other lands. A graceful white butterfly constantly fluttered round her, and at last alighted on the leaf. Thumbelina pleased him, and she was glad of it, for now the toad could not possibly reach her, and the country through which she sailed was beautiful, and the sun shone upon the water, till it glittered like liquid gold. She took off her girdle and tied one end of it round the butterfly, and the other end of the ribbon she fastened to the leaf, which now glided on much faster than ever, taking little Thumbelina with it as she stood. Presently a large June-bug flew by; the moment he caught sight of

her, he seized her round her delicate waist with his claws, and flew with her into a tree. The green leaf floated away on the brook, and the butterfly flew with it, for he was fastened to it, and could not get away.

Oh, how frightened little Thumbelina felt when the June-bug flew with her to the tree! The beautiful white butterfly floated away with the leaf, but the June-bug did not trouble himself at all about that. He seated himself by her side on a large green leaf, gave her some honey from the flowers to eat, and told her she was very pretty, though not in the least like a June-bug. After a time, all the June-bugs who lived in the tree came to visit her. They stared at Thumbelina, and then the young lady June-bugs turned up their feelers, and said, "She has only two legs! how ugly that looks." "She has no feelers," said another. "Her waist is quite slim. Pooh! she is like a human being."

"Oh! she is ugly," said all the lady June-bugs, although Thumbelina was very pretty. Then the June-bug who had run away with her believed all the others when they said she was ugly, and would have nothing more to say to her, and told her she might go where she liked. He flew down with her from the tree, and placed her on a daisy, where she cried because she was so ugly that even the June-bugs would have nothing to do with her. And yet she was really the loveliest creature that one could

imagine, and as tender and delicate as a beautiful rose-leaf. Poor little Thumbelina lived quite alone in the wide forest all that summer. She wove herself a bed with blades of grass, and hung it up under a broad leaf, to protect herself from the rain. She sucked the honey from the flowers for food, and drank the dew from their leaves every morning. So the summer and the autumn passed away, and then came the winter,—the long, cold winter. All the birds who had sung to her so sweetly flew away, and the trees and the flowers were withered. The large clover leaf, under which she had lived, had shriveled up, and left nothing but a dry yellow stalk. She shivered with cold, for her clothes were worn out. It began to snow and each flake was like a whole shovelful falling upon one of us, for we are large, but she was only an inch high. Then she wrapped herself up in a dry leaf, but that cracked in the middle, and did not keep her warm, and she shook with cold.

Near the wood in which she had been living lay a large corn-field, but the corn had been cut a long time, and nothing remained but the bare, dry stubble standing up out of the frozen ground. It was like a large wood to her. Oh! how she shivered with the cold. She came at last to the door of a field-mouse, who had a little home under the corn-stubble. The field-mouse lived there, warm and comfortable, with a whole roomful of corn, a

kitchen, and a beautiful dining-room. Poor little Thumbelina stood before the door like a little beggar-girl, and begged for a small piece of barleycorn, for she had been without a morsel to eat for two long days.

"You poor little creature," said the field-mouse, who was really a good old field-mouse, "come into my warm room and dine with me." She was so pleased with Thumbelina that she said, "You are quite welcome to stay with me all the winter, if you like; but you must keep my rooms clean and neat, and tell me stories, for I like them very much." So Thumbelina did all the field-mouse desired, and was very comfortable on the whole.

One day the field-mouse said, "We shall have a visitor soon. My neighbor pays me a visit once a week. He is better off than I am; he has large rooms, and wears a beautiful black velvet coat. If you could only have him for a husband, you would be well provided for indeed. But he is blind, so you must tell him the prettiest stories you know."

But Thumbelina did not feel at all interested in this neighbor, for he was a mole. However, he came and paid his visit, dressed in his black velvet coat.

"He is very rich and learned, and his house is twenty times larger than mine," said the field-mouse.

He was rich and learned, no doubt, but he

always spoke slightingly of the sun and the pretty flowers, because he had never seen them. Thumbelina was obliged to sing to him, " Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home," and many other pretty songs. And the mole fell in love with her sweet voice. A short time before, he had dug a long passage under the earth, which led from the dwelling of the field-mouse to his own, and the field-mouse and Thumbelina had permission to walk whenever they liked. He warned them not to be afraid of a dead bird that lay in the passage. The mole took a piece of phosphorescent wood in his mouth; it shone like fire in the dark and he led them through the long, dark passage. When they came to the spot where the dead bird lay, the mole pushed his broad nose through the ceiling, so as to make a large hole, through which the daylight shone into the passage. In the middle of the floor lay a dead swallow, his beautiful wings folded close to his sides, his feet and his head drawn up under his feathers. It made little Thumbelina very sad to see it, she so loved the little birds who had sung and twittered for her so beautifully all summer. But the mole pushed it aside with his crooked legs, and said, " He will sing no more now. How miserable it must be to be born a little bird! I am thankful that none of my children will ever be birds."

" Yes," exclaimed the field-mouse. " What is the use of his twittering, for when winter comes he

must either starve or be frozen to death. Still birds are very high bred."

Thumbelina said nothing; but when the two others had turned their backs on the bird, she stooped down and stroked the soft feathers of his head, and kissed the closed eyelids. "Perhaps this was the very one who sang to me so sweetly in the summer," she said; "and how much pleasure you gave me, you dear, pretty bird."

The mole now stopped up the hole through which the daylight shone, and led the ladies home again. But during the night Thumbelina could not sleep, so she got out of bed and wove a large, beautiful rug of hay. She carried it to the dead bird, and spread it over him, with some down from the flowers which she had found in the field-mouse's room. It was as soft as wool, and she spread some of it on each side of the bird, so that he might lie warmly in the cold earth.

"Farewell, pretty bird," said she, "farewell and thank you for your sweet singing through the summer, when all the trees were green, and the warm sun shone upon us." Then she laid her head on the bird's breast, but she was startled, for it seemed as if something inside the bird went "thump, thump." It was the bird's heart. He was not really dead, only numbed with the cold, and the warmth was restoring him to life.

In autumn, all the swallows fly away to warm

countries, but if one happens to linger, the cold seizes it, it falls and remains where it fell, until the cold snow covers it. Thumbelina trembled; she was quite frightened, for the bird was large, a great deal larger than herself—she was only an inch high. But she took courage, laid the wool more thickly over the poor swallow, and then brought a leaf which she had used for her own counterpane, and laid it over the head of the poor bird.

The next night she again stole out to see him. He was alive but very weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment to look at Thumbelina, who stood holding a piece of phosphorescent wood in her hand, for she had no other lantern.

"Thank you, pretty child," said the sick swallow; "I have been so nicely warmed, that I shall be strong again and able to fly about in the warm sunshine."

"Oh," said she, "it is cold outdoors now; it snows and freezes. Stay in your warm bed! I will take care of you!"

She brought the swallow some water in a flower-leaf, and, after he had drunk, he told her that he had wounded one of his wings in a thorn-bush, and could not fly as fast as the others, who were soon far away on their journey to warm countries. At last he had fallen and could remember no more, nor how he came where she had found him. The whole winter the swallow remained underground,

and Thumbelina nursed him with care and love. Neither the mole nor the field-mouse knew anything about it, for they did not like swallows.

The spring came, and the sun warmed the earth. Then the swallow bade farewell to Thumbelina, and she opened the hole which the mole had made in the ceiling. The sun shone in upon them so beautifully, that the swallow asked her if she would go with him; she could sit on his back, he said, and he would fly away with her into the green woods. But Thumbelina knew it would make the field-mouse sad if she left her that way, so she said, "No, I cannot."

"Farewell, then, farewell, you good, pretty little girl," said the swallow and flew out into the sunshine.

Thumbelina looked after him, and the tears rose in her eyes for she was very fond of the swallow.

"Tweet, tweet," sang the bird, flying out into the green woods. Thumbelina felt very sad. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn which had been sown in the field over the house of the field-mouse had grown high into the air; it was a thick wood to Thumbelina, who was only an inch high.

"You are going to be married, Thumbelina," said the field-mouse. "My neighbor has asked for you. What good fortune for a poor child like you! Now we will make your wedding clothes.

HE PLACED HIS GOLD CROWN ON HER HEAD

They must be both woolen and linen. Nothing must be wanting when you are the mole's wife."

Thumbelina had to turn the spinning wheel, and the field-mouse hired four spiders, who were to weave day and night. Every evening the mole visited her, and was always speaking of the time when the summer would be over. Then he would keep his wedding-day with Thumbelina; but now the heat of the sun was so great that it burned the earth, and made it quite hard, like a stone. As soon as the summer was over, the wedding should take place.

But Thumbelina was not happy; for she did not like the tiresome mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it went down, she would creep out at the door, and as the wind blew aside the leaves of the corn, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how beautiful and bright it seemed out there, and wished so much to see her dear swallow again.

When autumn arrived, Thumbelina's outfit was ready, and the field-mouse said, " In four weeks the wedding must take place."

Then Thumbelina cried, and said she did not want to marry the tiresome mole.

" Nonsense," replied the field-mouse. " Don't be foolish. He is a very handsome mole; the queen herself does not wear more beautiful velvets

and furs. His kitchens and cellars are quite full. You ought to be thankful for such good fortune."

So the wedding-day was fixed, and the mole was to take Thumbelina to live with him, deep under the earth, and never again to see the warm sun, because he did not like it. The field-mouse had given her permission to stand at the door before she left.

"Farewell, bright sun," she cried, stretching out her arm towards it and she walked a short distance from the house for the corn had been cut, and only the dry stubble was left in the fields. "Farewell, farewell," she repeated, twining her arm round a little red flower. "Greet the little swallow from me, if you should see him again."

"Tweet, tweet," sounded over her head. She looked up, and there was the swallow himself flying close by. As soon as he spied Thumbelina, he was delighted. She told him how she was to marry the ugly mole, and how unhappy she felt that she must live always beneath the earth, and never see the bright sun any more. And as she told him, she wept.

"Cold winter is coming," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away into warmer countries. Will you go with me? You can sit on my back, and fasten yourself on with your sash. Then we can fly away from the ugly mole and his gloomy home—far away, over the mountains, to

warm countries, where the sun shines more brightly than here; where it is always summer, and the flowers are always in bloom. Fly now with me, dear little Thumbelina—you who saved my life when I lay frozen in that dark, dreary passage."

"Yes, I will go with you," said Thumbelina. She seated herself on the bird's back, with her feet on his outstretched wings, and tied her girdle to one of his strongest feathers.

Then the swallow rose in the air, and flew over forest and over sea, high above the highest mountains, covered with snow that never melts. Thumbelina would have been frozen in the cold air, but she crept under the bird's warm feathers, keeping her little head uncovered, so that she might admire the beautiful lands over which they passed. At length they reached the warm countries, where the sun shines more brightly, and the sky seems much higher above the earth. Here, on the hedges, and by the wayside, grew purple, green, and white grapes and lemons and oranges hung from trees in the woods; the air was fragrant with myrtles and orange blossoms. Beautiful children ran along the country lanes, playing with gay butterflies; and as the swallow flew farther and farther, every place appeared still more lovely.

At last they came to a blue lake, and by the side of it, shaded by trees of the deepest green, stood a palace of dazzling white marble, built in ancient

times. Vines clustered round its lofty pillars, and at the top were many swallows' nests; one of these was the home of the swallow who carried Thumbelina.

"This is my house," said the swallow; "but you would not be comfortable in it. Choose one of those lovely flowers, and I will put you down upon it, and then you shall have everything that you can wish to make you happy."

"That will be delightful," said Thumbelina, clapping her little hands.

A marble pillar had fallen to the ground, and lay there broken into three pieces. Between these pieces grew most beautiful large white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbelina, and placed her on one of the broad leaves. How astonished she was to see, in the middle of the flower, a tiny little man, as white and transparent as if he had been made of crystal! He had a gold crown on his head, and delicate wings at his shoulders, and was not much larger than Thumbelina herself. He was the angel of the flower; for a tiny man or a tiny woman dwells in every flower; and this was the king of them all.

"Oh, how beautiful he is!" whispered Thumbelina to the swallow.

The little prince was at first quite frightened at the bird, who was like a giant, compared to such a delicate little creature as himself; but when he saw

Thumbelina, he was delighted. She was the prettiest little maid he had ever seen. He took the gold crown from his head, and placed it on hers, and asked her name, and if she would be his queen of all the flowers.

So she said, "Yes," to the handsome prince. Then all the flowers opened, and out of each came a little lady or a tiny lord, all so pretty that it was a pleasure to look at them. Each of them brought Thumbelina a present. The best gift was a pair of beautiful wings, which had belonged to a large white fly. They were fastened to Thumbelina's shoulders, so that she might fly from flower to flower. Then there was much rejoicing, and the little swallow, who sat above them, in his nest, was asked to sing a wedding song, which he did as well as he could; but in his heart he felt sad, for he was very fond of Thumbelina, and would have liked never to part from her again.

"You must not be called Thumbelina any more," said the spirit of the flowers to her. "It is an ugly name, and you are so very pretty. We will call you May."

"Farewell, farewell," said the swallow, as he left the warm countries, to fly back into Denmark. There he had a nest over the window of a house in which dwelt the man who wrote this story. The swallow sang, "Tweet, tweet," and from his song came the whole story.

Hans Clodhopper

HANS CLODHOPPER

THERE was once an old mansion in the country, in which an old squire lived with his two sons, and these two sons were too clever by half. They had made up their minds to propose to the king's daughter, and they ventured to do so, because she had made it known that she would take any man for a husband who had most to say for himself. These two took a week over their preparations; it was all the time they had for it, but it was quite enough with all their accomplishments, which were most useful. One of them knew the Latin Dictionary by heart, and the town newspapers for three years either forwards or backwards. The second one had made himself acquainted with all the statutes of the Corporations, and what every alderman had to know. So he thought he was competent to talk about affairs of state; and he also knew how to embroider harness, for he was clever with his fingers.

"I shall win the king's daughter," they both said,

and their father gave each of them a beautiful horse. The one who could repeat the Dictionary and the newspapers had a coal-black one, while the one who was learned in Guilds and embroideries had a milk-white one. They smeared the corners of their horses' mouths with oil to make them more flexible. All the servants were assembled in the courtyards to see them mount, but just then the third brother came up, for there were three, only nobody made any account of this one, Hans Clodhopper, as he had no accomplishments like his brothers.

"Where are you going with all your fine clothes on?" he asked.

"To court, to talk ourselves into favor with the princess. Haven't you heard the news which is being drummed all over the country?" And they told him the news.

"Preserve us! then I must go, too," said Hans Clodhopper. But his brothers laughed and rode away.

"Father, give me a horse. I want to get married, too. If she takes me, she takes me, and if she doesn't take me, I shall take her all the same."

"Stuff and nonsense," said his father, "I will give no horse to you. Why, you have got nothing to say for yourself, but your brothers are fine fellows."

"If I mayn't have a horse," said Hans Clod-

hopper, "I'll take the billy-goat, he is my own and he can carry me very well!" And he seated himself astride the billy-goat, dug his heels into its sides, and galloped off down the highroad.

"Here I come," shouted Hans Clodhopper, and he sang till the air rang with it.

The brothers rode on in silence, they did not say a word to each other, for they had to store up every good idea to produce later on, and their speeches had to be very carefully thought out.

"Halloo!" shouted Hans Clodhopper, "here I come; see what I've found on the road," and he showed them a dead crow.

"What on earth will you do with that, Clodhopper?" said they.

"I will give it to the king's daughter."

"Yes, I would do that," said they, and they rode on laughing.

"Halloo, here I come; see what I have found; one doesn't find such a thing as this every day on the road." The brothers turned round to see what it was.

"Clodhopper," said they, "it's nothing but an old wooden shoe with the upper part broken off. Is the princess to have that, too?"

"Yes, indeed she is," said Hans, and the brothers again rode on, laughing.

"Halloo, halloo, here I am," shouted Hans Clodhopper. "Now this is famous."

"What have you found this time?" asked the brothers.

"Won't the princess be delighted!"

"Why," said the brothers, "it's only sand picked up out of the ditch!"

"Yes, that it is," said Hans Clodhopper, "and the finest kind of sand, too. You can hardly hold it." And he filled his pockets with it. The brothers rode on as fast as they could, and arrived at the town gates a whole hour before him. At the gate the suitors received tickets, in the order of their arrival, and they were arranged in rows, six in each file, and so close together that they could not move their arms which was a very good thing, or they would have torn each other's garments off, merely because one stood in front of the other. All the other inhabitants of the town stood round the castle, peeping in at the windows to see the king's daughter receive the suitors, and as each one came into the room he lost the power of speech.

"No good," said the princess. "Away with him!"

Now came the brother who could repeat the Lexicon, but he had entirely forgotten it while standing in the ranks. The floor creaked and the ceiling was made of looking-glass, so that he saw himself standing on his head; and at every window sat three clerks and an alderman, who wrote down all that was said, so that it might be sent to the

HE PUT THE CROW INTO THE WOODEN SHOE

papers at once, and sold for a halfpenny at the street corners. It was terrible, and the stoves had been heated to such a degree that they got red-hot at the top.

"It is terribly hot in here," said the suitor.

"That is because my father is roasting cockerels to-day," said the princess.

Bah! There he stood like a fool; he had not expected a conversation of this kind, and he could not think of a word to say.

"No good," said the king's daughter. "Away with him," and he had to go.

Then came the second brother. "There's a fearful heat here," said he.

"Yes, we are roasting cockerels to-day," said the king's daughter.

"What did—what?" said he, and all the reporters duly wrote, "What did—what."

"No good," said the king's daughter. "Away with him."

Then came Hans Clodhopper. He rode the billy-goat right into the room.

"What a burning heat you have here," said he.

"That is because I am roasting cockerels," said the king's daughter.

"That is very convenient," said Hans Clodhopper; "then I suppose I can get a crow roasted, too."

"Yes, very well," said the king's daughter; "but

have you anything to roast it in? For I have neither pot nor pan."

"But I have," said Hans Clodhopper. "Here is a cooking pot." And he brought out the wooden shoe and put the crow into it.

"Why you have enough for a whole meal," said the king's daughter; "but where shall we get any dripping to baste it with?"

"Oh, I have some in my pocket," said Hans Clodhopper; "I have enough and to spare," and he poured a little of the sand out of his pocket.

"Now I like that," said the princess; "you have an answer for everything, and you have something to say for yourself. I will have you for a husband. But do you know that every word we have said will be in the paper to-morrow, for at every window sit three clerks and an alderman, and the alderman is the worst, for he doesn't understand." She said this to frighten him.

"Oh, those are the gentry," said Hans Clodhopper; "then I must give the alderman the best thing I have," and he turned out his pockets and threw the sand in his face.

"That was cleverly done," said the princess, "I couldn't have done it, but I will try to learn."

So Hans Clodhopper became king, gained a wife and a crown and sat upon the throne. We have this straight out of the alderman's newspaper, but it is not to be depended upon.

The Steadfast Tin Soldier

THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five and twenty tin soldiers, all brothers, for they were the offspring of the same old tin spoon. Each man shouldered his gun, kept his eyes well to the front, and wore the smartest red and blue uniform imaginable. The first thing they heard in their new world, when the lid was taken off the box, was a little boy clapping his hands and crying, "Soldiers, soldiers!" It was his birthday and they had just been given to him; so he lost no time in setting them up on the table. All the soldiers were exactly alike with one exception, and he differed from the rest in having only one leg. For he was made last, and there was not quite enough tin left to finish him. However, he stood just as well on his one leg, as the others on two, in fact he is the very one who is to become famous. On the table where they were being set up, were many other toys; but the chief thing which caught the eye was a delightful paper castle. You could see through the tiny windows, right into the rooms. Outside there were some

little trees surrounding a small mirror, representing a lake, whose surface reflected the waxen swans which were swimming about on it. It was altogether charming, but the prettiest thing of all was a little maiden standing at the open door of the castle. She, too, was cut out of paper, but she wore a dress of the lightest gauze, with a dainty little blue ribbon over her shoulders, by way of a scarf, set off by a brilliant spangle, as big as her whole face. The little maid was stretching out both arms, for she was a dancer, and in the dance, one of her legs was raised so high into the air that the tin soldier could see absolutely nothing of it, and supposed that she, like himself, had but one leg.

"That would be the very wife for me!" he thought; "but she is much too grand; she lives in a palace, while I only have a box, and then there are five and twenty of us to share it. No, that would be no place for her, but I must try to make her acquaintance!" Then he lay down full length behind a snuff box, which stood on the table. From that point he could have a good look at the little lady, who continued to stand on one leg without losing her balance.

Late in the evening the other soldiers were put into their box, and the people of the house went to bed. Now was the time for the toys to play; they amused themselves with paying visits, fighting battles, and giving balls. The tin soldiers rustled

about in their box, for they wanted to join the games, but they could not get the lid off. The nut-crackers turned somersaults, and the pencil scribbled nonsense on the slate. There was such a noise that the canary woke up and joined in, but his remarks were in verse. The only two who did not move were the tin soldier and the little dancer. She stood as stiff as ever on tiptoe, with her arms spread out; he was equally firm on his one leg, and he did not take his eyes off her for a moment.

Then the clock struck twelve, and pop! up flew the lid of the snuff box, but there was no snuff in it, no! There was a little black goblin, a sort of Jack-in-the-box.

"Tin soldier!" said the goblin, "have the goodness to keep your eyes to yourself."

But the tin soldier feigned not to hear.

"Ah! you just wait till to-morrow," said the goblin.

In the morning, when the children got up, they put the tin soldier on the window frame, and, whether it was caused by the goblin or by a puff of wind, I do not know, but all at once the window burst open, and the soldier fell head foremost from the third story.

It was a terrific descent, and he landed at last, with his leg in the air, and rested on his cap, with his bayonet fixed between two paving stones. The maid-servant and the little boy ran down at once

to look for him, but although they almost trod on him, they could not see him. Had the soldier only called out, "Here I am," they would easily have found him, but he did not think it proper to shout when he was in uniform.

Presently it began to rain, and the drops fell faster and faster, till there was a regular torrent. When it was over two street boys came along.

"Look out!" said one; "there is a tin soldier! He shall go for a sail!"

So they made a boat out of a newspaper and put the soldier into the middle of it, and he sailed away down the gutter; both boys ran alongside clapping their hands. Good heavens! what waves there were in the gutter, and what a current, but then it certainly had rained cats and dogs. The paper boat danced up and down, and now and then whirled round and round. A shudder ran through the tin soldier, but he remained undaunted, and did not move a muscle, only looked straight before him with his gun shouldered. All at once the boat drifted under a long wooden tunnel, and it became as dark as it was in his box.

"Where am I going now!" thought he. "Well, well, it is all the fault of that goblin! Oh, if only the little maiden were with me in the boat it might be twice as dark for all I should care!"

At this moment a big water rat, who lived in the tunnel, came up.

"THAT WOULD BE THE VERY WIFE FOR ME!"

"Have you a pass?" asked the rat. "Hand up your pass!"

The tin soldier did not speak, but clung still tighter to his gun. The boat rushed on, the rat close behind. Phew, how he gnashed his teeth and shouted to the bits of stick and straw.

"Stop him, stop him, he hasn't paid his toll! He hasn't shown his pass!"

But the current grew stronger and stronger, the tin soldier could already see daylight before him at the end of the tunnel; but he also heard a roaring sound, fit to strike terror to the bravest heart. Just imagine! Where the tunnel ended the stream rushed straight into the big canal. That would be just as dangerous for him as it would be for us to shoot a great rapid.

He was so near the end now that it was impossible to stop. The boat dashed out; the poor tin soldier held himself as stiff as he could; no one should say of him that he even winced.

The boat swirled round three or four times, and filled with water to the edge; it must sink. The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, and the boat sank deeper and deeper. The paper became limper and limper, and at last the water went over his head—then he thought of the pretty little dancer, whom he was never to see again, and this refrain rang in his ears:

"Onward! Onward! Soldier!
For death thou canst not shun."

At last the paper gave way entirely and the soldier fell through—but at that moment he was swallowed by a big fish.

Oh! how dark it was inside the fish, it was worse than being in the tunnel even, and it was so narrow! But the tin soldier was as dauntless as ever, and lay full length shouldering his gun.

The fish rushed about and made the most frantic movements. At last it became quite quiet, and after a time, a flash like lightning pierced it. The soldier was once more in the broad daylight, and someone called out loudly, "A tin soldier!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, sold, and brought into the kitchen, where the cook cut it open with a large knife. She took the soldier up by the waist, with two fingers, and carried him into the parlor, where everyone wanted to see the wonderful man, who had traveled about in the stomach of a fish; but the tin soldier was not at all proud. They set him up on the table, and, wonder of wonders! he found himself in the very same room that he had been in before. He saw the very same children, and the toys were still standing on the table, as well as the beautiful castle with the pretty little dancer.

She still stood on one leg, and held the other up

in the air. You see she also was unbending. The soldier was so much moved that he was ready to shed tears of tin, but that would not have been fitting. He looked at her, and she looked at him, but they said never a word. At this moment one of the little boys took up the tin soldier, and without rhyme or reason, threw him into the fire. No doubt the little goblin in the snuff box was to blame for that. The tin soldier stood there, lighted up by the flame, and in the most horrible heat; but whether it was the heat of the real fire, or the warmth of his feelings, he did not know. He had lost all his gay color; it might have been from his perilous journey, or it might have been from grief, who can tell?

He looked at the little maiden, and she looked at him, and he felt that he was melting away, but he still managed to keep himself erect, shouldering his gun bravely.

A door was suddenly opened, the draught caught the little dancer and she fluttered like a sylph, straight into the fire, to the soldier. When the maid took away the ashes next morning she found in them a small tin heart.

The Bell

THE BELL

IN the evening, at sunset, when glimpses of golden clouds could just be seen among the chimney pots, a curious sound would be heard, first by one person, then by another; it was like a church bell, but it only lasted a moment because of the rumble of vehicles and the street cries.

"There is the evening bell," people would say. "The sun is setting."

Those who went outside the town where the houses were more scattered, each with its garden or little meadow, saw the evening star and heard the tones of the bell much better. It seemed as if the sound came from a church buried in silent, fragrant woods, and people looked in that direction, feeling quite solemn.

Time passed, and still people said, one to the other, "Can there be a church in the woods? That bell has such a wonderfully sweet sound. Shall we go and look at it closer?" The rich people drove and the poor ones walked, but it was a very long way; when they reached a group of willows

which grew on the outskirts of the wood, they sat down and looked up among the long branches, thinking that they were really in the heart of the forest. A confectioner from the town came out and pitched a tent there, and then another confectioner, and he hung a bell up over his tent. This bell was tarred so as to stand the rain, and the clapper was wanting. When people went home again, they said it had been so romantic, and that meant something beyond mere tea. Three persons protested that they had penetrated right through the forest to the other side, and that they had heard the same curious bell all the time, but that then it sounded as if it came from the town.

One of them wrote a poem about it, and said that it sounded like a mother's voice to a beloved child, no melody could be sweeter than the chimes of this bell.

The emperor's attention was also drawn to it, and he promised that anyone who really discovered where the sound came from should receive the title of " the world's bell-ringer," even if there was no bell at all.

A great many people went to the woods for the sake of earning an honest penny, but only one of them brought home any kind of explanation. No one had been far enough, not even he himself, but he said that the sound of the bell came from a very big owl in a hollow tree; it was a wise owl,

which perpetually beat its head against a tree, but whether the sound came from its head, or from the hollow tree, he could not say with any certainty. All the same he was appointed " the world's bell-ringer," and every year he wrote a little treatise on the owl, but nobody was much the wiser for it.

Now, on a certain Confirmation day, the priest had preached a very moving sermon, all the young people about to be confirmed had been much touched by it; it was a very important day for them. They were leaving childhood behind and becoming grown-up persons, the child's soul was, as it were, to be transformed into that of a responsible being. It was a beautiful sunny day and after the Confirmation the young people walked out of the town and they heard the sound of the unknown bell with more than usual loudness coming from the wood. On hearing it, they all felt anxious to go further and see it—all except three. The first of these had to go home to try on her ball-dress; it was this very dress and this very ball which were the reason for her having been confirmed this time; otherwise it would have been put off. The second was a poor boy, who had borrowed his tail-coat and boots of the landlord's son and he had to return them at the appointed time. The third said that he had never been anywhere without his parents, that he had always been a good child and he meant to continue so, although he was confirmed; nobody

ought to have made fun of this resolve, but he did not escape being laughed at.

So these three did not go. The others trudged off. The sun shone and the birds sang and the newly-confirmed young people took each other by the hand and sang with them. They had not yet received any position in life; they were all equal in the eye of the Lord on the day of their Confirmation. Soon two of the smallest ones got tired and they returned to town; two little girls sat down and made wreaths, so they did not go, either. When the others reached the willows where the confectioners had their tents, they said, "Now, then, here we are; the bell doesn't exist, it is only something people imagine!"

Just then a bell was heard in the wood, with its deep rich notes, and four or five of them decided after all to penetrate further into the wood. The underwood was so thick and close that it was quite difficult to advance. The woodruff grew almost too high, convolvulus and brambles hung in long garlands from tree to tree, where the nightingales sang and the sunbeams played. It was deliciously peaceful, but there was no path for the girls, their clothes would have been torn to shreds. There were great boulders overgrown with many-colored mosses, and fresh springs trickled among them with a curious little gurgling sound.

"Surely that cannot be the bell!" said one of the young people, as he lay down to listen.

"This must be thoroughly looked into." So he stayed behind and let the others go on.

They came to a little hut made of bark and branches overhung by a crab-apple, as if it wanted to shake all its bloom over the roof, which was covered with roses. The long sprays clustered round the gable, and on it hung a little bell. Could this be the one they sought? Yes, they were all agreed that it must be, except one; he said it was far too small and delicate to be heard so far away as they had heard it, and that the tones which moved all hearts were quite different from these. He who spoke was a king's son, and so the others said "that kind of fellow must always be wiser than anyone else."

So they let him go on alone, and as he went, he was more and more overcome by the solitude of the wood; but he still heard the little bell with which the others were so pleased, and now and then when the wind came from the direction of the confectioners he could hear demands for tea.

But the deep-toned bell sounded above them all, and it seemed as if there was an organ playing with it, and the sounds came from the left, where the heart is placed.

There was a rustling among the bushes, and a little boy stood before the king's son; he had

wooden shoes on, and such a small jacket that the sleeves did not cover his wrists. They knew each other, for he was the boy who had had to go back to return the coat and the boots to the landlord's son. He had done this, changed back into his shabby clothes and wooden shoes, and then, drawn by the deep notes of the bell, had returned to the wood again.

"Then we can go together," said the king's son.

But the poor boy in the wooden shoes was too bashful. He pulled down his short sleeves, and said he was afraid he could not walk quickly enough, besides which he thought the bell ought to be looked for on the right, because that side looked the most beautiful.

"Then we sha'n't meet at all," said the king's son, nodding to the poor boy, who went into the thickest and darkest part of the wood, where the thorns tore his shabby clothes and scratched his face, hands and feet till they bled. The king's son got some good scratches, too, but he at least had the sun shining upon his path. We are going to follow him, for he is a bright fellow.

"I must and will find the bell," said he, "if I have to go to the end of the world."

Some horrid monkeys sat up in the trees grinning and showing their teeth.

"Shall we pelt him?" said they. "Shall we thrash him? He is a king's son."

HE SANK UPON HIS KNEES AND SANG A PSALM

But he went confidently on, further and further into the wood, where the most extraordinary flowers grew. There were white star-like lilies with blood-red stamens, pale blue tulips which glistened in the sun, and apple-trees on which the apples looked like great shining soap-bubbles. You may fancy how these trees glittered in the sun. Round about were beautiful green meadows where stags and hinds gamboled under the spreading oaks and beeches. Mosses and creepers grew in the fissures where the bark of the trees was broken away. There were also great glades with quiet lakes, where white swans swam about flapping their wings. The king's son often stopped and listened, for he sometimes fancied that the bell sounded from one of these lakes, but then again he felt sure that it was not there, but further in the wood.

Now the sun began to go down, and the clouds were fiery red. A great stillness came over the wood, and he sank upon his knees, sang his evening psalm, and said, "Never shall I find what I seek. Now the sun is going down and the night is coming on—the dark night. Perhaps I could catch one more glimpse of the round, red sun before it sinks beneath the earth. I will climb up on to those rocks; they are as high as the trees."

He seized the roots and creepers, and climbed up the slippery stones where the water-snakes

wriggled and the toads seemed to croak at him, but he reached the top before the sun disappeared. Seen from this height, oh! what splendor lay before him! The ocean, the wide, beautiful ocean, its long waves rolling towards the shore. The sun still stood like a great shining altar, out there where sea and sky met. Everything melted away into glowing colors; the wood sang, the ocean sang, and his heart sang with them. All Nature was like a vast holy temple, where trees and floating clouds were the pillars, flowers and grass the woven tapestry, and the heaven itself a great dome. The red colors vanished as the sun went down, but millions of stars peeped out; they were like countless diamond lamps, and the king's son spread out his arms towards heaven, sea and forest. At that moment, from the right-hand path came the poor boy with the short sleeves and wooden shoes. He had reached the same goal, just as soon, by his own road. They ran towards each other, and clasped each other's hands in that great temple of Nature and Poetry, and above them sounded the invisible holy bell; happy spirits floated round it to the strains of a joyous Hallelujah.

The Nightingale

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN China, the emperor is a Chinaman, and all the people around him are Chinamen, too. It is many years since the story I am going to tell you happened, but that is all the more reason for telling it, lest it should be forgotten. The emperor's palace was the most beautiful thing in the world; it was made entirely of the finest porcelain, very costly, but at the same time so fragile that it could only be touched with the very greatest care. There were the most extraordinary flowers to be seen in the garden; the most beautiful ones had little silver bells tied to them, which tinkled perpetually, so that one could not pass the flowers without looking at them. Every little detail in the garden had been most carefully thought out, and it was so big, that even the gardener himself did not know where it ended. If one went on walking, one came to beautiful woods with lofty trees and deep lakes. The wood extended to the sea, which was deep and blue, deep enough for large ships to sail right up under the branches of the trees. Among these

trees lived a nightingale, which sang so deliciously, that even the poor fisherman who had plenty of other things to do, lay still to listen to it, when he was out at night drawing in his nets. "Heavens, how beautiful it is!" he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot it. The next night when he heard it again he would again exclaim, "Heavens, how beautiful it is!"

Travelers came to the emperor's capital, from every country in the world; they admired everything very much, especially the palace and the gardens, but when they heard the nightingale they all said, "This is better than anything!"

When they got home they described it, and the learned ones wrote many books about the town, the palace and the garden, but nobody forgot the nightingale, it was always put above everything else. Those among them who were poets wrote the most beautiful poems, all about the nightingale in the woods by the deep blue sea. These books went all over the world, and in course of time, some of them reached the emperor. He sat in his golden chair reading and reading, and nodding his head, well pleased to hear such beautiful descriptions of the town, the palace and the garden. "But the nightingale is the best of all," he read.

"What is this?" said the emperor. "The nightingale? Why, I know nothing about it. Is there such a bird in my kingdom, and in my own

garden into the bargain, and I have never heard of it? Imagine my having to discover this from a book!"

Then he called his gentleman-in-waiting, who was so grand that when anyone of a lower rank dared to speak to him, or to ask him a question, he would only answer "P," which means nothing at all.

"There is said to be a very wonderful bird called a nightingale here," said the emperor. "They say that it is better than anything else in all my great kingdom! Why have I never been told anything about it?"

"I have never heard it mentioned," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "It has never been presented at court."

"I wish it to appear here this evening to sing to me," said the emperor. "The whole world knows what I am possessed of, and I know nothing about it!"

"I have never heard it mentioned before," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I will seek it, and I will find it!" But where was it to be found? The gentleman-in-waiting ran upstairs and downstairs and in and out of all the rooms and corridors. No one of all those he met had ever heard anything about the nightingale; so the gentleman-in-waiting ran back to the emperor, and said that it must be a myth, invented by the writers of the books.

"Your imperial majesty must not believe everything that is written; books are often mere inventions, even if they do not belong to what we call the black art!"

"But this book was sent to me by the powerful Emperor of Japan, so it can't be untrue. I will hear this nightingale; I insist upon its being here to-night. I extend my most gracious protection to it, and if it is not forthcoming, I will have the whole court trampled upon after supper!"

"Tsing-pe!" said the gentleman-in-waiting, and away he ran again, up and down all the stairs, in and out of all the rooms and corridors; half the court ran with him, for they none of them wished to be trampled on. There was much questioning about this nightingale, which was known to all the outside world, but to no one at court. At last they found a poor little maid in the kitchen. She said, "Oh heavens, the nightingale? I know it very well. Yes, indeed it can sing. Every evening I am allowed to take broken meat to my poor sick mother: she lives down by the shore. On my way back, when I am tired, I rest a while in the wood, and then I hear the nightingale. Its song brings the tears into my eyes, I feel as if my mother were kissing me!"

"Little kitchen maid," said the gentleman-in-waiting, "I will procure you a permanent position in the kitchen and permission to see the emperor

dining, if you will take us to the nightingale. It is commanded to appear at court to-night."

Then they all went out into the wood where the nightingale usually sang. Half the court was there. As they were going along at their best pace a cow began to bellow.

"Oh!" said a young courtier, "there we have it. What wonderful power for such a little creature; I have certainly heard it before."

"No, those are the cows bellowing, we are a long way yet from the place."

Then the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Beautiful!" said the Chinese chaplain; "it is just like the tinkling of church bells."

"No, those are the frogs!" said the little kitchen maid. "But I think we shall soon hear it now!"

Then the nightingale began to sing.

"There it is!" said the little girl. "Listen, listen, there it sits!" and she pointed to a little gray bird up among the branches.

"Is it possible?" said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I should never have thought it was like that. How common it looks. Seeing so many grand people must have frightened all its colors away."

"Little nightingale!" called the kitchen maid quite loud, "our gracious emperor wishes to hear you sing to him!"

"With the greatest pleasure!" said the nightingale, warbling away in the most delightful fashion.

"It is just like crystal bells," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "Look at its little throat, how active it is. It is extraordinary that we have never heard of it before! I am sure it will be a great success at court!"

"Shall I sing again to the emperor?" said the nightingale, who thought he was present.

"My precious little nightingale," said the gentleman-in-waiting, "I have the honor to command your attendance at a court festival to-night, where you will charm his gracious majesty the emperor with your fascinating singing."

"It sounds best among the trees," said the nightingale, but it went with them willingly when it heard that the emperor wished it.

The palace had been brightened up for the occasion. The walls and the floors, which were all of china, shone by the light of many thousand golden lamps. The most beautiful flowers, all of the tinkling kind, were arranged in the corridors; there was hurrying to and fro, and one's ears were full of the tinkling. In the middle of the large reception room, where the emperor sat, a golden rod had been fixed, on which the nightingale was to perch. The whole court was assembled, and the little kitchen maid had been permitted to stand behind the door, as she now had the actual title of cook. They were all dressed in their best; everybody's eyes were turned towards the little gray bird

THE MUSIC MASTER PRAISED THE BIRD TREMENDOUSLY

at which the emperor was nodding. The nightingale sang delightfully, and the tears came into the emperor's eyes, nay, they rolled down his cheeks. The nightingale sang more beautifully than ever; its notes touched all hearts. The emperor was charmed, and said the nightingale should have his gold slipper to wear round its neck. But the nightingale declined with thanks, it had already been sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the eyes of the emperor, that is my richest reward. The tears of an emperor have a wonderful power! God knows I am sufficiently recompensed!" and then it again burst into its sweet heavenly song.

"That is the most delightful coquetting I have ever seen!" said the ladies, and they took some water into their mouths to try and make the same gurgling, when anyone spoke to them thinking so to equal the nightingale. Even the lackeys and the chambermaids announced that they were satisfied, and that is saying a great deal, they are always the most difficult people to please. Yes, indeed, the nightingale had made a sensation. It was to stay at court now, and to have its own cage, as well as liberty to walk out twice a day, and once in the night. It always had twelve footmen, each one holding a ribbon which was tied round its leg. There was not much pleasure in an outing of that sort.

The whole town talked about the marvelous bird, and if two people met, one said to the other "Night," and the other answered "Gale," and then they sighed, perfectly understanding each other. Eleven cheese-mongers' children were named for it, but they had not a voice among them.

One day a large parcel came for the emperor, outside was written the word "Nightingale."

"Here we have another new book about this celebrated bird," said the emperor. But it was no book, it was a little work of art in a box, an artificial nightingale, exactly like the living one, but it was studded all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires.

When the bird was wound up, it could sing one of the songs the real one sang, and it wagged its tail which glittered with silver and gold. A ribbon was tied round its neck on which was written, "The Emperor of Japan's nightingale is very poor, compared to the Emperor of China's."

Everybody said, "Oh, how beautiful!" And the person who brought the artificial bird immediately received the title of Imperial Nightingale-Carrier in Chief.

"Now, they must sing together. What a duet that will be!"

Then they had to sing together, but they did not get on very well, for the real nightingale sang in

its own way, and the artificial one could only sing waltzes.

"There is no fault in that," said the music master; "it is perfectly in time and correct in every way!"

Then the artificial bird had to sing alone. It was just as great a success as the real one, besides it was so much prettier to look at; it glittered like bracelets and breast-pins.

It sang the same tune three and thirty times over, and yet it was not tired; people would willingly have heard it from the beginning again, but the emperor said that the real one must have a turn now—but where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown out of the open window, back to its own green woods.

"But what is the meaning of this?" said the emperor.

All the courtiers railed at it, and said it was a most ungrateful bird.

"We have got the best bird, though," said they, and then the artificial bird had to sing again, and this was the thirty-fourth time they heard the same tune, but they did not know it thoroughly even yet; it was so difficult.

The music master praised the bird tremendously, and insisted that it was much better than the real nightingale, not only as regarded the outside with all the diamonds, but the inside, too.

" Because you see, my ladies and gentlemen, and the emperor before all, in the real nightingale you never know what you will hear, but in the artificial one everything is decided beforehand! So it is, and so it must remain, it can't be otherwise. You can account for things, you can open it and show the human ingenuity in arranging the waltzes, how they go, and how one note follows upon another!"

" Those are exactly my opinions," they all said, and the music master got leave to show the bird to the public, next Sunday. They might also hear it sing, said the emperor. So they heard it, and all became as enthusiastic over it as if they had drunk themselves merry on tea—a thoroughly Chinese habit.

Then they all said, " Oh," and stuck their forefingers in the air and nodded their heads; but the poor fishermen who had heard the real nightingale said, " It sounds very nice, and it is very like the real one, but there is something wanting, we don't know what." The real nightingale was banished from the kingdom.

The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion, close to the emperor's bed: all the presents it had received of gold and precious jewels were scattered round it. Its title had risen to be " Chief Imperial Singer of the Bed-Chamber," in rank number one, on the left side; for the emperor

reckoned that side the important one, where the heart was seated. Even an emperor's heart is on the left side. The music master wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird; the treatise was very long, and written in all the most difficult Chinese characters. Everybody said they had read and understood it, for otherwise they would have been reckoned stupid and then their bodies would have been trampled upon.

Things went on in this way for a whole year. The emperor, the court, and all the other Chinamen knew every little gurgle in the song of the artificial bird by heart; but they liked it all the better for this, and they could all join in the song themselves. Even the street boys sang "zizizi" and "cluck, cluck, cluck," and the emperor sang it, too.

But, one evening, when the bird was singing its best, and the emperor was lying in bed listening to it, something gave way inside the bird with a "whizz." Then a spring burst; "whirr" went all the wheels and the music stopped. The emperor jumped out of bed and sent for his private physicians, but what good could they do? Then they sent for the watchmaker, and after a good deal of talk and examination, he got the works to go again, somehow; but he said it would have to be saved as much as possible, because it was so worn out, and he could not renew the works so as to be sure of

the tune. This was a great blow! They only dared to let the artificial bird sing once a year, and hardly that; but then the music master made a little speech using all the most difficult words. He said it was just as good as ever, and his saying made it so.

Five years now passed, and then a great grief came upon the nation, for they were all very fond of their emperor. It was said he was ill and could not live. A new emperor was already chosen, and people stood about in the street, and asked the gentleman-in-waiting how their emperor was going on.

"P," answered he, shaking his head.

The emperor lay pale and cold in his gorgeous bed. The courtiers thought he was dead, and they all went off to pay their respects to their new emperor. The lackeys ran off to talk matters over, and the chambermaids gave a great coffee party. Cloth had been laid down in all the rooms and corridors so as to deaden the sound of footsteps, so it was very, very quiet. But the emperor was not dead yet. He lay stiff and pale in the gorgeous bed with its velvet hangings and heavy golden tassels. There was an open window high above him, and the moon streamed in upon the emperor, and the artificial bird beside him.

The poor emperor could hardly breathe; he seemed to have a weight on his chest. He opened his eyes and saw that it was Death sitting upon his

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A BURST OF LOVELY SONG

chest, wearing his golden crown. In one hand he held the emperor's golden sword, and in the other his imperial banner. Round about, from among the folds of the velvet hangings peered many curious faces, some were hideous, others gentle and pleasant. They were all the emperor's good and bad deeds, which now looked him in the face when Death was weighing him down.

"Do you remember that?" whispered one after the other. "Do you remember this?" and they told him so many things, that the perspiration poured down his face.

"I never knew that," said the emperor. "Music, music, sound the great Chinese drums!" he cried, "that I may not hear what they are saying." But they went on and on, and Death sat nodding his head, just like a Chinaman, at everything that was said.

"Music, music!" shrieked the emperor. "You precious little golden bird, sing, sing! I have loaded you with precious stones, and even hung my own golden slipper round your neck. Sing, I tell you, sing!"

But the bird stood silent, there was nobody to wind it up, so of course it could not go. Death continued to fix the great empty sockets of its eyes upon the emperor, and all was silent, so terribly silent.

Suddenly, close to the window, there was a burst

of lovely song; it was the living nightingale, perched on a branch outside. It had heard of the emperor's need, and had come to bring comfort and hope to him. And as it sang, the faces round the emperor became fainter and fainter, and the blood coursed with fresh vigor in his veins and through his feeble limbs. Even Death himself listened to the song and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on!"

"Yes, if you give me the gorgeous golden sword; yes, if you give me the imperial banner; yes, if you give me the emperor's crown."

And Death gave back each of these treasures for a song, and the nightingale went on singing. It sang about the quiet churchyard, where the roses bloom, where the elder flower scents the air, and where the fresh grass is ever moistened anew by the tears of the mourner. This song brought to Death a longing for his own garden, and like a cold gray mist, he passed out of the window.

"Thanks, thanks!" said the emperor; "you heavenly little bird, I know you! I banished you from my kingdom, and yet you have charmed the evil visions away from my bed by your song, and even Death away from my heart! How can I ever repay you?"

"You have rewarded me," said the nightingale. "I brought the tears to your eyes, the very first time I ever sang to you, and I shall never forget it!

Those are the jewels which gladden the heart of a singer. But sleep now, and wake up fresh and strong! I will sing to you!"

Then it sang again, and the emperor fell into a sweet refreshing sleep. The sun shone in at his window, when he woke fresh and well; none of his attendants had yet come back to him, for they thought he was dead, but the nightingale still sat there singing.

"You must always stay with me!" said the emperor. "You shall only sing when you like, and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces!"

"Don't do that!" said the nightingale, "it did all the good it could! Keep it as you have always done! I can't build my nest and live in this palace, but let me come whenever I like, then I will sit on the branch in the evening and sing to you. I will sing to cheer you and to make you thoughtful, too; I will sing to you of the happy ones, and of those that suffer; I will sing about the good and the evil, which are kept hidden from you. The little singing bird flies far and wide, to the poor fisherman and the peasant's home, to numbers who are far from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet there is an odor of sanctity round the crown, too!—I will come, and I will sing to you!—But you must promise me one thing!"—

"Everything!" said the emperor, who stood there in his imperial robes which he had just put on, and he held the sword heavy with gold upon his heart.

"One thing I ask you! Tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything. It will be better so!"

Then the nightingale flew away. The attendants came in to see their dead emperor, and there he stood, bidding them "Good-morning!"

The Angel

THE ANGEL

EVERY time a good child dies, an Angel of God comes down to earth, takes the dead child in his arms, spreads his great white wings and flies with it to all the places the child had loved during his life. Then the angel plucks a handful of flowers which they carry with them up to God, there to bloom more brightly than ever upon earth. The good God presses all the flowers to His bosom, but those which He loves best He kisses, and in kissing them gives them voices, so that they can join in the great song of everlasting praise. Now all this was told by an angel as he carried a dead child away to Heaven, and the child listened as in a dream; then they soared over all those places in its home where the little one used to play, and they passed through gardens full of flowers.

"Which one shall we take with us to plant in Heaven?" asked the angel.

Close by stood a tall slender rose-bush, but an

evil hand had broken the stem and all the branches full of large half open buds hung withering from it.

"That poor bush!" said the child; "take it so that it may bloom up there in God's garden."

The angel took it and kissed the child for its thought, and the little one half opened its eyes. They also plucked some gorgeous flowers, but did not forget the despised marigolds and pansies.

"Now we have enough flowers," said the child, and the angel nodded but still they did not rise to Heaven. It was night, and very still; they remained in the great town, and hovered over one of the narrowest streets which was encumbered with heaps of straw, ash, and refuse of all kinds. It was just after quarter-day, and there had been various removals in the street, and bits of broken crockery, rags, and old hats were scattered about in every direction.

Among all the rubbish, the angel pointed to a broken flower pot and a few lumps of earth only held together by the roots of a large withered wild flower. It was no use and had therefore been thrown out of the window.

"We will take that with us," said the angel; "I will tell you about it as we fly along."

So, as they flew, the angel told this story:

"Down in that narrow street, in one of the dark cellars, lived a poor sick boy; he had been bed-

THEY PASSED OVER THE PLACES THE CHILD HAD LOVED

ridden ever since he was quite small. When he was at his best, he could just hobble once or twice up and down the room on crutches; that was all. For a few days in summer the sunbeams shone into the front room, for half an hour or so. The little boy would sit here warming himself in the sunbeams, and looking at the red blood in his thin transparent fingers when he held them up before his face. Then it was said, 'he has been out today.' All he knew of the woods in the first freshness of spring was when a neighbor's son brought him home a few beech branches. These he held above his head, and dreamed that he was sitting under the beech trees where the sun shone and the birds sang. One day the boy also brought him some wild flowers, and among them, by chance, was one with a root. So it was planted in a pot, and put in the window near his bed. The flower was planted by a loving hand, and it grew, put out new shoots, and for several years it bore fine flowers. It was a lovely garden to the sick boy and his greatest treasure on earth. He watered and tended it, and saw that it got every sunbeam it could as long as a ray could reach the low window. It grew into his dreams, it flowered for him, and for him it spread around its fragrance and gladdened his eyes; towards it he turned in death when his Heavenly Father called him. He has had his place in the presence of God now for a year, and

for a year the flower has stood forgotten in the window where it withered, and in the removal was thrown on to the rubbish heap in the street. It is that poor withered flower which we have added to our bouquet, for it has given more pleasure than any flower in the Queen's garden."

"But how do you know all this?" asked the child in the angel's arms.

"Because I was myself the little sick boy who used to hobble on crutches. I know my own flower, you may be sure."

The child opened its eyes wide and looked into the angel's beautiful happy face, and at this moment they found themselves in God's Heaven, where all was joy and gladness. The Heavenly Father pressed the dead child to His bosom, and it received wings like the other angel, and they flew hand in hand together. And God pressed all the flowers to His heart, but He kissed the poor withered wild flower, and it received a voice and joined the choir of angels who floated around the Almighty. Some were quite near, others again outside these in great circles extending to Infinity, but all equally happy. They all sang the glad song, great and small, the good child and the poor wild flower, which had lain upon the rubbish heap in the dark narrow street.

The Traveling Companions

THE TRAVELING COMPANIONS

POOR John was very sad, his father was ill and he knew that he could not recover. There was no one else in the little room besides these two. It was quite late at night and the lamp had nearly burned out.

"You have been a good son, John," said the dying man. "I am sure the Lord will help you on in the world!" and he fixed his mild, gentle eyes upon his son, drew a long breath and passed away so quietly, that he only seemed to be asleep. John wept bitterly, for now he had nobody in the world belonging to him, neither father nor mother, sister nor brother. Poor John! he knelt by the bedside and kissed his dead father's hands and shed many tears; but at last his eyes closed, and he fell asleep with his head against the hard bed-post.

He had a wonderful dream: he saw the sun and moon bowing before him, and he saw his father quite well and strong again; he laughed as he always used to laugh when he was very much pleased. A lovely girl with a golden crown on her

long, beautiful hair, stretched out her hand to John, and his father said, "See what a beautiful bride you have won. She is the loveliest maiden in the world." Then he woke up and all the beautiful things were gone; his father lay on the bed dead and cold, and there was no one else there! Poor John!

The dead man was buried the following week. John walked close behind the coffin, and he could no longer see his good father who had loved him so much. He heard the earth fall upon the coffin lid, and watched it till only a corner was left, and then the last shovelful fell upon it, and it was entirely hidden. He was so miserable, he felt as if his heart would break.

A beautiful psalm was being sung which brought the tears into his eyes. He wept, and this brought him relief. The sun was shining brightly on the green trees, and seemed to say, "Do not be so sad, John! See how blue the sky is. Your good father is up there, and he will pray to God that all may be well with you."

"I will always be good!" said John, "and then I shall go to Heaven sometime to my father, and what joy it will be to see each other again. How much I shall have to tell him, and he will have so much to show me, and to teach me about the bliss of Heaven, just as he used to teach me here on earth. Oh, what joy it will be!"

John saw it all so vividly that he smiled at the thought, although the tears still ran down his cheeks. The little birds in the chestnut tree twittered with joy although they had been at the funeral, but they knew that the dead man was in Heaven, and that he now had wings larger and more beautiful than their own. They knew, too, that he was happy, because he had been a good man here on earth, and they were glad of it. John saw them fly away from the trees out into the world, and he felt a strong desire to fly away with them. But first he made a wooden cross to put up on his father's grave. When he brought it along in the evening, he found the grave covered with sand and decorated with flowers. This had been done by strangers for love of his father.

Early next morning, John packed his little bundle and stowed away his sole inheritance in his belt. It only consisted of fifty dollars and a few silver coins, and with these he started out into the world. But first he went to the churchyard to his father's grave, where he knelt and said the Lord's prayer, and then added, "Farewell, dear father! I will always be good, and then you won't be afraid to pray to the good God that all may go well with me!"

The fields that John passed through were full of bright flowers, nodding their heads in the warm sunshine as much as to say, "Welcome into the

fields! Is it not lovely here?" But John turned round once more to look at the old church where he had been baptized, and where he had gone every Sunday and sung the psalms with his good old father. On looking back he saw standing in one of the loop-holes of the tower, the little church-Nissé with his pointed red cap, shading his eyes from the sun with his arm. John nodded good-by to him, and the little Nissé waved his hand and kissed his fingers to him to show that he was sending his good wishes for a pleasant journey.

John now began to think how many beautiful things he would see in the great beautiful world before him, and he went on and on till he found himself much further away than he had ever been before. He did not know the towns through which he passed, nor the people he met. He was quite among strangers. The first night he had to sleep under a haystack in a field, for he had no other bed. But he thought it was lovely, no king could have had a better one. The field by the river, the haystack and the deep blue sky above made a charming room. The green grass dotted with red and white flowers was the carpet, the elders and the rose-bushes were growing bouquets, and he had the whole river for a bath, with its clear fresh water, and the rushes which nodded their heads bidding him both "good-night" and "Good-morning." The moon was a great night light, high up

under the blue ceiling, one which would never set fire to the curtains. John could sleep quite quietly without fear, and this he did. He only woke when the sun was high up in the sky and all the little birds were singing "Good-morning! Good-morning! Are you not up yet?"

The bells were ringing for church. People were on their way to hear the parson pray and preach, and John went with them. He sang a psalm and listened to the word of God, and he felt as if he were in his own old church, where he had been christened, and where he had sung the psalms with his father. There were a great many graves in the churchyard, and some of them were overgrown with long grass. John thought of his father's grave, which some day might look like these, when he was no longer there to weed and trim it. So he knelt down, pulled up the long grass, and raised the wooden crosses that had fallen down. He picked up the wreaths that had been blown away and replaced them, thinking that perhaps someone would do the same for his father's grave now he was away.

An old beggar was standing outside the churchyard leaning on a crutch, and John gave him the few silver coins he had left, and then went happily and cheerfully on into the wide world. Towards evening a fearful storm came on and John hurried to get under shelter, but it soon grew dark. At

last he reached a little church standing on a solitary hill; the door was ajar, and he slipped in to take shelter till the storm was over.

"I will sit down here in a corner till the storm is over," he said; "I am quite tired and in need of a rest!" so he sat down, folded his hands, and said his evening prayer; and before he was aware of it, he was asleep and dreaming while it thundered and lightened outside.

When he awoke, it was the middle of the night and the storm was over: the moon was shining in upon him through the windows. In the middle of the aisle stood an open coffin with a dead man in it who was not yet buried. John was not at all afraid, for he had a good conscience, and he knew that the dead can do no harm; it is living wicked people who do harm to others. There were two such bad men standing by the coffin. They had come to do harm to the poor dead man; to turn him out of his coffin and throw the body outside the church door.

"Why do you want to do this?" asked John. "It is very wicked and disgraceful. Let the man rest for Heaven's sake!"

"Oh, nonsense!" replied the wretches. "He cheated us; he owed us money which he could not pay, and now he has gone and died into the bargain, and we shall never see a penny, so we want

to revenge ourselves. He shall lie like a dog outside the church doors!"

"I have not got more than fifty dollars," said John; "it is my whole inheritance, but I will gladly give it to you, if you will honestly promise me to leave the poor dead man in peace. I shall manage very well without the money. I have good strong limbs, and the Lord will always help me."

"Well," said the bad men, "if you are ready to pay his debt like that, we won't do him any harm, we can assure you!"

And they took the money John gave them, laughing at him for being such a simpleton, and then they went away. John put the body straight again, folded the hands, said good-by and went away through the woods in a state of great satisfaction. Around him, where the moon pierced through the trees, he saw numbers of little elves playing about merrily. They did not disturb themselves on his account, they knew very well that he was a good innocent person, and it is only bad people who never see the fairies. Some of them were no bigger than one's finger, and they had long yellow hair fastened up with golden combs. They swung, hand in hand, upon the big dewdrops which covered the leaves and the long grass. Sometimes the dewdrop rolled down, and then they fell with it down among the grass, and this caused great noise and laughter among the

little folks. It was very amusing. They sang all the pretty little songs John used to know when he was a little boy. Great spiders with silver crowns upon their heads spun their webs from branch to branch like bridges connecting palaces. They glittered in the moonlight like glass where the dew had fallen on them. They went on with their sports till the sun rose, and the little creature crept away into the flower buds, and the wind caught the bridges and palaces and swept them away into the air like cobwebs.

John had just got through the wood, when a strong man's voice called out behind him: "Hallo, comrade! whither away?"

"Out into the wide world," said John. "I have neither father nor mother. I am only a poor lad, but the Lord will protect me."

"I am going out into the wide world, too!" said the stranger. "Shall we go together?"

"By all means," said John, and so they walked on together.

They soon grew much attached to each other, for they were both good men, but John soon saw that the stranger was much wiser than himself, he had been round the greater part of the world, and he was well able to describe all that he had seen.

The sun was already high when they sat down under a big tree to eat their breakfast, and just then an old woman came up. She was very old

JUST THEN AN OLD WOMAN CAME UP

and bent, and walked with a crutch. She had a bundle of sticks she had picked up in the wood on her back, and her apron was fastened up, and John could see in it three bundles or fagots of dried fern and some willow twigs. When she got near them, her foot slipped and she fell with a loud shriek. The poor old woman had broken her leg.

John wanted to carry her home, but the stranger opened his knapsack, and took out a little pot of salve, which he said would make her leg well directly, and she would be able to walk home as well as if she had never broken it. But in payment for it, he wanted the three bundles of fern she had in her apron.

"That is very good payment," said the old

woman, nodding her head oddly. She did not want to part with her three bundles of fern, but it was not so pleasant to lie there with a broken leg, so she gave him the fagots. As soon as he had rubbed on the salve, the old woman got up and walked away faster than she had been able to do before. This was all the effect of the salve, but no such ointment as this was to be had at any chemist's.

"Whatever did you want with those bundles of fern?" said John to his companion.

"They make very good birch rods, and they are just what I like. I am a very queer fellow, you know!"

Then they walked on for a good bit.

"What a storm is drawing up there!" said John, pointing before him. "Those are terribly black clouds."

"No," said his fellow-traveler, "those are not clouds, they are mountains, beautiful high mountains, where you can get right above the clouds into the fresh air. It is splendid up there! To-morrow we shall just reach them."

They were not so near, however, as they seemed to be. It took them a whole day to reach the mountains, where the dark forests grew right up towards the sky, and where there were great boulders as big as houses, or even towns. It would be a heavy task to climb over all these, and so John and his fellow-traveler went into an inn to rest and

refresh themselves before they made the ascent next day. There were a number of people in the bar parlor at the inn, for there was a man showing off some marionettes. He had just put up his little theater, and the people were sitting round waiting for the play to begin. A fat old butcher had taken up his place in the middle of the front row, and he had a ferocious looking bulldog by his side, and it sat staring just as hard as anybody else.

Then the comedy began, and it was a very pretty play, with a king and queen in it. They sat on a velvet throne with golden crowns on their heads, and trains, for they could well afford it. The prettiest little wooden dolls stood by all the doors, they had bright glass eyes and big whiskers, and they were employed in opening and shutting the doors to let in the fresh air. It was a capital play and not at all a tragic one, but just as the queen got up to walk across the floor—Heaven knows what idea entered the bulldog's head, but finding that the butcher was not holding him, he made a great leap forward right into the middle of the theater and seized the queen by the slender waist, and crunched her head up. It was a terrible disaster!

The poor showman was quite frightened and also very sad about his queen, for she was his prettiest doll, and the horrid bulldog had entirely ruined her. But when all the people had gone

away, John's fellow-traveler said he could make her all right again, and he took out his little pot and rubbed some of the same ointment on to the doll which had cured the poor old woman who had broken her leg. As soon as ever the doll had been rubbed over with the ointment, she became whole again, nay, she could even move all her limbs herself; it was no longer necessary to pull the wires. The doll was exactly like a living being. The showman was delighted, because now he did not have to hold the wires at all for this doll, as she could dance quite well by herself, and none of the others could do that.

At night, when everybody had gone to bed, someone was heard sighing most dolefully, and it went on so long that everybody got up to see who it could be. The showman went along to his theater, because that was where the sighs seemed to come from. All the wooden dolls were lying in a heap; it was the king and his guards who were sighing so dismally and staring with their glass eyes. They all wanted to be rubbed with some of the same ointment as the queen, so that they might be able to move their limbs as well as she did. She threw herself down on her knees and stretched out her hands with her golden crown, saying, " Pray, take this, but do, please, rub some of the ointment on to my consort and the courtiers! " The poor man who owned the theater and the marionettes

could not help crying, he was so sorry for them. He immediately promised the traveling-companion that he would give him all the money he possessed if he would only anoint five or six of the prettiest dolls.

But the traveling-companion said that he did not want anything except the big sword that the showman wore at his side, and as soon as it was given him he anointed six dolls. They began to dance about at once so prettily that all the real, living girls who saw them began to dance, too. The coachman and the cook, the waiter and the chambermaid, and all the strangers joined in, as well as the shovel and the tongs, but those two fell on the top of each other just as they were making their first bound. It was indeed a lively night!

Next morning, John and his traveling-companion went away from them all, up the high mountains and through the great pine forests. They got so high that at last the church towers far below looked like little red berries among all the green; and they could see far away for many, many miles, to places where they had never been! John had never seen so many of the beauties of this beautiful world all together before. The warm sun shone brightly in the clear blue sky, and the huntsman was heard winding his horn among the mountains. It was all so peaceful and sweet that it brought tears to his eyes, and he could not

help exclaiming, " Great God, I could fall down and kiss the hem of Thy garment out of gratitude for all Thy good gifts to us! "

His traveling-companion also stood with folded hands looking at the woods and the villages basking in the warm sunshine. They heard a wonderful and beautiful sound above their heads, and looked up. A great white swan was hovering in the air above them. It sang as they had never heard any bird sing before, but the song became fainter and fainter, and the swan gradually sank down before their feet, where it lay dead—the beautiful bird.

" Two such beautiful wings," said the traveling-companion. " Such big white ones are worth a lot of money; I will take them with me. Now you see what a good thing it was that I got this sword! " and with one blow he struck off both wings of the dead swan, for he meant to keep them.

They traveled many, many miles over the mountains, till at last they saw before them a great town with over a hundred towers, which glittered like silver in the sunshine. In the middle of the town was a splendid marble palace, thatched with gold, in which the king lived.

John and his traveling-companion did not want to go into town at once. They stopped at an inn outside to change their clothes, as they wished to look their best when they walked through the

"PRAY RUB THE OINTMENT ON TO MY COURTIERS"

streets. The host told them that the king was such a good old man, he never did any harm to anyone, but his daughter—Heaven preserve us! She was a wicked princess.

Beauty she had more than enough of; nobody could be so beautiful and fascinating as she was, but what was the good of it when she was such a bad, wicked witch, who was the cause of so many handsome princes having lost their lives. She had given permission to anybody to court her. Anyone who would might come, were he prince or beggar—it was all the same to her; he only had to guess three riddles she asked him. If he could answer them, she would marry him, and he would be king over all the land when her father died, but if he failed to answer them, he either had to be hanged or to have his head cut off. So bad and so wicked was this beautiful princess. Her father, the old king, was much grieved by it, but he could not prevent her from being so wicked, for he had once said that he would never have anything to do with her lovers; she must deal with them herself as she liked. Every prince who had yet come to guess the riddles so as to gain the princess had failed, and so he had either been hanged or had his head cut off. Each one had been warned, and he need not have paid his addresses unless he had liked. The old king was so grieved by all this trouble and misery that he and his soldiers spent a

whole day, every year, on their knees praying that the princess might become good. But she had no intention of so doing. The old women who drank brandy dyed it black before they drank it; that was their way of mourning, and what more could they do!

"That vile princess!" said John. "She ought to be well birched, that would be the best thing for her. If I were the king I would make the blood run!" Just then they heard all the people in the streets shouting "Hurrah!" The princess was passing, and she was really so beautiful that when they saw her everybody forgot how wicked she was, and so they all shouted "Hurrah." Twelve beautiful maidens clothed in white silk with golden tulips in their hands, rode twelve coal-black horses by her side. The princess herself was on a snow-white horse, adorned with diamonds and rubies; her riding dress was of pure gold, and the whip in her hand looked like a sunbeam. The golden crown on her head seemed to be made of little twinkling stars from the sky; and her cloak was sewn all over with thousands of beautiful butterflies' wings. But she was far, far more beautiful than all her clothes.

When John saw her, his face became red as blood, and he could hardly say a single word; the princess was the image of the beautiful girl with the golden crown whom he had seen in his dream,

the night his father died. He thought her so beautiful that he at once fell in love with her. It certainly could not be true, he thought, that she could be a wicked witch who allowed people to be hanged or executed if they could not guess her riddles. "Anyone may pay his addresses to her, even the poorest peasant. I will go to the palace myself! I can't help going!"

They all said that he ought not to go as he would only meet the same fate as the others. His traveling-companion also advised him against going, but John thought he would be sure to get on all right. So he brushed his coat and shoes, washed his hands and face, and combed his yellow hair, and then went quite alone to the town and straight up to the palace.

"Come in," said the old king when John knocked at the door. He opened it, and the old king in his dressing-gown and slippers came towards him. He had his gold crown on his head, the scepter in one hand, and the golden ball in the other. "Wait a moment," said he, tucking the ball under his arm so as to be able to shake hands with John. But as soon as he heard that John was a suitor, he began to cry so much that both the ball and the scepter rolled on to the floor, and he had to wipe his eyes with his dressing-gown. The poor old king!

"Let it alone!" said he; "you are sure to fail

just like the others, I am convinced of it!" Then he led John into the princess' pleasure garden, which was a ghastly sight. From every tree hung three or four kings' sons who had come to court the princess, but who had been unable to guess her riddles. With every gust of wind the bones rattled so that all the little birds were frightened away and they never dared come into the garden; all the flowers were tied up to human bones in the place of stakes, and human skulls grinned out of every flower pot. It was indeed a nice garden for a princess.

"Here you see," said the old king, "your fate will be just the same as all these. Do give it up. It makes me most unhappy, I take it so much to heart." John kissed the old king's hand and said he thought it would be all right for he was so fond of the beautiful princess.

Just then the princess came herself with all her ladies driving into the palace gardens, so they went up to her and said "Good-morning." She was certainly very beautiful as she shook hands with John, and he was more in love with her than ever; it was impossible that she could be the wicked witch people said she was. They all went up into the hall and the little pages brought jam and gingerbread nuts to them; but the old king was so sad that he could eat nothing, besides the ginger nuts were too hard for him.

It was now decided that John was to come up to the palace the next morning, when the judges and all the council would be assembled to hear if he could guess the first riddle. If he succeeded the first time, he would have to come twice more, but nobody yet had ever guessed the first riddle.

John was not a bit alarmed about himself; he was delighted, and only thought of the lovely princess. He felt quite certain that the good God would help him, but in what manner it would be he had not the slightest idea, nor did he trouble his head about it. He danced along the highway, when he went back to the inn where his traveling-companion was waiting for him. John was never tired of telling how charming the princess had been towards him, and how lovely she was. He was longing for the next day to come, when he was to go to the palace to try his luck with the riddles. But his traveling-companion shook his head and was quite sad.

"I am so fond of you," he said. "We might have been companions for a long time yet, and now I shall lose you directly! My poor dear John, I could weep over you, but I will not spoil your pleasure on the last evening we perhaps may spend together. We will be merry, as merry as possible. To-morrow when you are gone, I can be sad!"

Everybody in the town had heard directly that a new suitor had come for the princess, and there

was general mourning. The theater was closed, and all the cakewomen tied black crêpe round the sugar pigs. The king and the priests were praying on their knees in the churches, and there was universal grief, for they all knew that there could be no better fate in store for John than for the other suitors.

Late in the evening the traveling-companion made a great bowl of punch, and said to John that they must be merry now and drink the princess' health. But when John had drunk two glasses he became so sleepy that he could not hold up his head, and he fell fast asleep. His traveling-companion lifted him up quietly from his chair, and laid him on his bed. As soon as it was dark, he took the two big wings which he had cut off the swan, and tied them on to his own shoulders; then he put the biggest bunch of twigs he had got from the old woman who had broken her leg into his pocket, opened the window, and flew over the roofs of the houses right up to the palace, where he sat down in a corner under the window of the princess' bedroom.

The whole town was quiet. As the clock struck the quarter before twelve, the window was opened, and the princess flew out in a great white cloak and long black wings. She flew over the town to a great mountain, but the traveling-companion made himself invisible and flew behind her, rain-

ing blows on her back with his birch rod, till the blood flowed. Oh, what a flight that was through the air; the wind caught her cloak, which spread out on every side like the sail of a ship, and the moon shone through it.

"How it hails, how it hails!" said the princess at every blow, but she richly deserved it.

At last they reached the mountain and knocked. There was a rumble as of thunder, the side of the mountain opened, and the princess went in closely followed by the traveling-companion. No one saw him as he was quite invisible. They went through a long passage which glittered curiously, owing to thousands of shining spiders which swarmed over the walls, shedding a fiery light. They next reached a great hall built of gold and silver, with red and blue flowers as big as sunflowers all over the walls. No one could pick these flowers, for the stems were poisonous snakes, and the flowers were flames coming out of their mouths. The ceiling was covered with shining glow-worms and pale blue bats which flapped their transparent wings. This had an extraordinary effect. In the middle of the floor was a throne supported on four horses' legs with harness of the red fiery spiders. The throne itself was of milky glass, and the cushions were made of little black mice holding on to each other by the tails. There was a canopy above it of rose-colored spider's web, dotted with

the most exquisite little green flies which glittered like diamonds.

A hideous old ogre sat in the middle of the throne with a crown on his ugly head and a scepter in his hand. He kissed the princess on her forehead, and made her sit down by him on the costly throne, then the music began! Great black grasshoppers played upon Jews' harps, and the owl beat upon his own stomach in place of a drum. It was a most absurd concert. Numbers of tiny little elves, each with a firefly on their little caps, danced round the hall. No one could see the traveling-companion, but he could see and hear everything from behind the throne, where he had placed himself. The courtiers, who now made their appearance, looked most grand and proper, but anyone who could really see perceived at once what they were. They were merely broomsticks with cabbages for heads, into which the ogre had put life by his magic powers and dressed them up in embroidered clothes. But this did not matter a bit, for they were only used on grand occasions.

After the dancing had gone on for a time, the princess told the ogre that she had another suitor, and asked him what she had better think of to put as a riddle the next day.

"Listen!" said the ogre; "I will tell you what! You must think of something very simple, and then he will never think of it. Let us say one of your

own shoes! He will never guess that! Then have his head chopped off, but don't forget when you come here to-morrow night to bring me his eyes. I want to eat them."

The princess curtsied low, and said that she would not forget the eyes. The ogre opened the mountain, and she flew home again; and, as before, the traveling-companion followed her closely and beat her so hard with the birch rod that she groaned at the terrible hailstorm and hurried back as fast as she could to her bedroom window. The traveling-companion flew back to the inn, where he found John still fast asleep. Then he took off his own clothes and went to bed, too, for he had good right to be tired.

John woke quite early in the morning, and the traveling-companion got up at the same time, and told him that he had had a wonderful dream about the princess and her shoe, and he begged John to ask the princess if she had not thought of her shoe. This was of course what he had heard the ogre say in the mountain, but he did not want to tell John anything about that, and so he merely told him it was a dream.

"I may just as well ask that as anything else!" said John. "Perhaps your dream will come true, for I always think God will help me! All the same I will say good-by, for, if I guess wrong, you will never see me again."

So they kissed each other, and John went to the town and up to the palace. The hall was full of people. The judges were seated in their arm-chairs and they had down pillows under their heads for they had so much to think about. The old king stood near, wiping his eyes with a white pocket handkerchief. Then the princess came in, greeting everyone very pleasantly, and she was even lovelier than yesterday. She shook hands with John and said, "Good-morning to you." Now John had to guess what she had thought of. She looked at him most sweetly, but as soon as she heard him say the word shoe, she turned as white as a sheet and trembled all over; but that was no good, for he had guessed aright.

Preserve us! how pleased the old king was! He turned head over heels without stopping and everybody clapped their hands both on his account and on John's, whose first guess had been right.

The traveling-companion beamed with delight when he heard how successful John had been. But John folded his hands and thanked God, who no doubt would also help him on the two following occasions. The next day was fixed for the second riddle.

The evening passed just as the previous one had done. When John had gone to sleep the traveling-companion flew behind the princess to the mountain, and he beat her harder than ever, for this

time he had taken two birch rods with him. Nobody could see him and he heard everything as before. The princess was to think of her glove, and this he told John just as if it had been a dream. John, of course, could easily guess aright and again there was great delight in the palace. The whole court turned somersaults as they had seen the king do the first time; but the princess lay on the sofa and would not say a single word. Now all turned upon whether John guessed the third riddle, or not. If he did, he would win the princess and inherit the whole kingdom when the old king died, but if he was wrong, he would lose his life and the ogre would eat his beautiful blue eyes.

The evening before, John went early to bed, said his prayers, and slept as peacefully as possible; but the traveling-companion tied the wings to his back, and bound the sword round his waist, took all the birch rods, and flew off to the palace.

It was a pitch dark night. There was such a gale that the tiles flew off the roofs, and the trees in the garden of bones bent like reeds before the wind. The lightning flashed every moment, and the thunder rolled continuously the whole night long. The window burst open and the princess flew out. She was as pale as death, but she laughed at the storm as if it were not bad enough. Her white mantle swirled about in the wind like the sails of a ship. The traveling-companion beat her

with his three birches till the blood dripped on to the ground. She could hardly fly any further. At last they reached the mountain.

"What a hailstorm there is!" she said as she entered. "I have never been out in such a bad one!"

"One may even have too much of a good thing!" said the ogre.

Then she told him that John's second guess had been right, and that if he was successful again in the morning, she would never be able to come and see him again in the mountain. Nor would she ever be able to do any more of the sorcerer's tricks as before, and she was very sad about it.

"He shall never guess it," said the ogre.

"I shall think of something that will never enter his head. But we will have some fun first!" And he took the princess by both hands and they danced round the room with all the little elves and the fireflies. The red spiders ran merrily up and down the walls, and the fire flowers seemed to give out sparks. The owls played their drums, the crickets chirped, and the grasshoppers played their harps. It was a very gay ball.

After they had danced some time the princess was obliged to go home, or she would be missed, and the ogre said he would go with her so as to have more of her company. So away they flew through the storm, and the traveling-companion

HE WAS FRIGHTENED WHEN HE SAW THE HIDEOUS HEAD

wore out his birch rods on their backs; never had the ogre been out in such a hailstorm. He said good-by to the princess outside the palace, and whispered to her, "Think of my head," but the traveling-companion heard what he said, and at the very moment when the princess slipped in at her window, and the ogre was turning away to go back, he seized him by his long black beard, and before he had time to look round cut off his head close to the shoulders with his big sword. He threw the body into the sea to be food for the fishes, but he only dipped the head into the water and tied it up in his silk handkerchief and took it back to the inn, and he then went to bed.

Next morning, he gave John the handkerchief, but said he must not open it before the princess asked him what she had thought about.

There were so many people in the hall that they were packed as close together as a bundle of radishes. The judges were sitting in their arm-chairs with the soft down cushions, and the old king had his new clothes on, and his crown and scepter had been polished up and looked quite festive. But the princess was very, very pale, and she was dressed in black as if for a funeral.

"What have I thought of?" she asked John; and he immediately untied the handkerchief, and was very much frightened himself when he saw the hideous ogre's head. A shudder ran through

the whole assemblage, but the princess seemed turned to stone, and could not say a single word. At last, she got up and gave her hand to John, for he had guessed all the riddles. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but sighed deeply, and said, "You are my master now. Our wedding shall take place to-night."

"I like that," said the old king; "that is just as it should be."

All the people shouted hurrah, the guard's band played in the streets, the bells rang, and the cake-women took the crêpe off the sugar pigs, because all was now rejoicing. Three oxen stuffed with chickens and ducks were roasted whole in the market place, and everyone could cut off a portion for themselves. The fountains played wine instead of water, and anyone who bought a penny roll had six large buns full of plums given in.

In the evening the whole town was illuminated. The soldiers fired salutes, and the boys let off squibs and crackers. At the palace all was eating and drinking, toasting and dancing. The grand gentlemen danced with the pretty ladies, and the singing could be heard far and wide.

But the princess was still bewitched, and she did not care a bit about John. The traveling-companion knew this, and gave him three feathers out of the swan's wings and a little bottle with a few drops of liquid in it. He told John to have a large

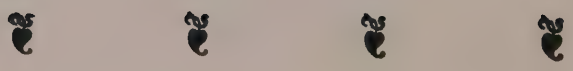
bath full of water placed by the side of the bed, and when the princess was going to get into bed, he must give her a little push so that she fell into the water, where he was to dip her three times, first having thrown the three feathers and the drops of liquid into it. She would then be released from the spell and would grow very fond of him.

John did everything as he was told. The princess shrieked, when he dipped her into the water, and struggled in his hands in the form of a black swan with glittering eyes. The second time she came up as a white swan, except for a black ring round the neck. John prayed humbly to God, and the third time she came up as a lovely princess. She was more lovely than she had been before, and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for having released her from the spell.

Next morning the old king came with all his courtiers to offer their congratulations, and this went on all day. Last of all, came the traveling-companion. He had his stick in his hand and his knapsack on his back. John kissed him over and over, and said that he must not go away; he must stay with them, as he was the cause of all their happiness. But the traveling-companion shook his head, and said gently and tenderly, "No; my time is up. I have only paid my debt. Do you remember the dead man whom you prevented the wicked men from disturbing? You gave all that

you possessed so that he might have rest in his grave. I am the dead man!" And he immediately vanished.

The wedding festivities lasted a whole month. John and the princess were devoted to each other, and the old king had many happy days in which to let their little children play "ride a cock-horse" on his knee and to play with his scepter. But John was king over the whole country.



The Tinder Box

THE TINDER BOX

A SOLDIER came marching along the high-road. One, two! One, two! He had his knapsack on his back and his sword at his side, for he had been to the wars and he was on his way home now. He met an old witch on the road. She was so ugly, her lower lip hung right down on to her chin.

She said " Good-evening, soldier! What a nice sword you've got, and such a big knapsack; you are a real soldier! You shall have as much money as ever you like! "

" Thank you kindly, you old witch! " said the soldier.

" Do you see that big tree! " said the witch, pointing to a tree close by. " It is hollow inside! Climb up to the top and you will see a hole into which you can let yourself down, right down under the tree! I will tie a rope round your waist so that I can haul you up again when you call! "

" What am I to do down under that tree? " asked the soldier.

"Fetch money!" said the witch. "You must know that when you get down to the bottom of the tree you will find yourself in a wide passage; it's quite light there, for there are over a hundred blazing lamps. You will see three doors which you can open, for the keys are there. If you go into the first room you will see a big box in the middle of the floor. A dog is sitting on top of it, and he has eyes as big as saucers, but you needn't mind that. I will give you my blue checked apron, which you can spread out on the floor; then go quickly forward, take up the dog and put him on my apron, open the box and take out as much money as ever you like. It is all copper, but if you like silver better, go into the next room. There you will find a dog with eyes as big as millstones; but never mind that, put him on my apron and take the money. If you prefer gold you can have it too, and as much as you can carry, if you go into the third room. But the dog sitting on that box has eyes each as big as the Round Tower. He is a dog, indeed, as you may imagine! But don't let it trouble you; you only have to put him on to my apron and then he won't hurt you, and you can take as much gold out of the box as you like!"

"That's not so bad!" said the soldier. "But what am I to give you, old witch? For you'll want something, I'll be bound."

"No," said the witch, "not a single penny do I

want. I only want you to bring me an old tinder box that my grandmother forgot the last time she was down there!"

"Well! tie the rope round my waist!" said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my blue-checked apron."

Then the soldier climbed up the tree, let himself slide down the hollow trunk, and found himself, as the witch had said, in the wide passage where the many hundred lamps were burning.

Now he opened the first door. Ugh! There sat the dog with eyes as big as saucers, staring at him.

"You are a nice fellow!" said the soldier, as he put him on to the witch's apron, and took out as many pennies as he could cram into his pockets. Then he shut the box, and put the dog on top of it again, and went into the next room. Hallo! there sat the dog with eyes as big as millstones.

"You shouldn't stare at me so hard! You might get a pain in your eyes!" Then he put the dog on the apron, but when he saw all the silver in the box he threw away all the coppers and stuffed his pockets and his knapsack with silver. Then he went on into the third room. Oh! how horrible! that dog really had two big eyes as big as the Round Tower, and they rolled round and round like wheels.

"Good-evening!" said the soldier, saluting, for

he had never seen such a dog in his life; but after looking at him for a bit he thought, "That will do," and he lifted him down on to the apron and opened the chest. Preserve us! What a lot of gold! He could buy the whole of Copenhagen with it, and all the sugar pigs from the cake-women, all the tin soldiers, whips and rocking-horses in the world! That was money indeed! Now the soldier threw away all the silver he had filled his pockets and his knapsack with, and put gold in its place. Yes, he crammed all his pockets, his knapsack, his cap and his boots so full that he could hardly walk! Now, he really had got a lot of money. He put the dog back on to the box, shut the door, and shouted up through the tree, "Haul me up, you old witch!"

"Have you got the tinder box?"

"Oh! to be sure!" said the soldier. "I had quite forgotten it." And he went back to fetch it. The witch hauled him up, and there he was, standing on the highroad again with his pockets, boots, knapsack and cap full of gold.

"What do you want the tinder box for?" asked the soldier.

"That's no business of yours," said the witch. "You've got the money. Give me the tinder box!"

"Rubbish!" said the soldier. "Tell me directly what you want with it, or I will draw my sword and cut off your head."

"I won't!" said the witch.

Then the soldier cut off her head. There she lay, but he tied all the money up in her apron, slung it on his back like a pack, put the tinder box in his pocket, and marched off to the town.

It was a beautiful town, and he went straight to the finest hotel, ordered the grandest rooms and all the food he liked best, for he was a rich man, now that he had so much money.

Certainly the servant who had to clean his boots thought they were very funny old things for such a rich gentleman, but he had not had time yet to buy any new ones; the next day he bought new boots and fine clothes. The soldier now became a fine gentleman, and the people told him all about the grand things in the town, and about their king, and what a lovely princess his daughter was.

"Where is she to be seen?" asked the soldier.

"You can't see her at all!" they all said. "She lives in a great copper castle surrounded with walls and towers. Nobody but the king dare go in and out, for it has been prophesied that she will marry a common soldier, and the king doesn't like that!"

"I should like to see her well enough!" thought the soldier. But there was no way of getting leave for that.

He now led a very merry life, went to theaters, drove about in the King's Park, and gave away a lot of money to the poor people, which was very

nice of him; for he remembered how disagreeable it used to be not to have a penny in his pocket. Now he was rich, wore fine clothes, and had a great many friends, who all said what a nice fellow he was—a thorough gentleman—and he liked to be told that.

But as he went on spending money every day and his store was never renewed, he at last found himself with only two pence left. Then he was obliged to move out of his fine rooms. He had to take a tiny little attic up under the roof, clean his own boots, and mend them, himself, with a darning needle. None of his friends went to see him, because there were far too many stairs.

One dark evening, when he had not even enough money to buy a candle with, he suddenly remembered that there was a little bit in the old tinder box he had brought out of the hollow tree, when the witch helped him down. He got out the tinder box with the candle end in it and struck fire. As the sparks flew out from the flint, the door burst open and the dog with eyes as big as saucers, which he had seen down under the tree, stood before him and said, "What does my lord command?"

"By heaven!" said the soldier, "this is a nice kind of tinder box, if I can get whatever I want like this! Get me some money," he said to the dog, and away it went.

THERE SAT THE DOG WITH EYES AS BIG AS SAUCERS

It was back in a twinkling with a big bag full of pennies in its mouth.

Now the soldier saw what a treasure he had in the tinder box. If he struck once, the dog which sat on the box of copper came; if he struck twice, the dog on the silver box came, and if he struck three times, the one from the box of gold.

He now moved down to the grand rooms and got his fine clothes again, and then all his friends knew him once more and liked him as much as ever.

Then he began to think: After all, it's a curious thing that no man can get a sight of the princess! Everyone says she is so beautiful! But what is the good of that, when she always has to be shut up in that big copper palace with all the towers. Can I not somehow manage to see her? Where is my tinder box? Then he struck the flint, and, whisk, came the dog with eyes as big as saucers.

"It certainly is the middle of the night," said the soldier, "but I am very anxious to see the princess, if only for a single moment."

The dog was out of the door in an instant, and before the soldier had time to think about it, he was back again with the princess. There she was, fast asleep on the dog's back, and she was so lovely that anybody could see that she must be a real princess! The soldier could not help it; he was obliged to kiss her, for he was a true soldier.

Then the dog ran back again with the princess, but in the morning when the king and queen were having breakfast, the princess said that she had had such a wonderful dream about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden on the dog's back, and the soldier had kissed her.

"That's a pretty tale," said the queen.

After this an old lady-in-waiting had to sit by her bed at night to see if this was really a dream.

The soldier longed so intensely to see the princess again that at night the dog came to fetch her. He took her up and ran off with her as fast as he could, but the old lady-in-waiting put on her galoshes and ran just as fast behind them. When she saw that they disappeared into a large house, she thought, now I know where it is, and made a big cross with chalk on the gate. Then she went home and lay down, and presently the dog came back, too, with the princess. When the dog saw that there was a cross on the gate, he took a bit of chalk, too, and made crosses on all the gates in the town. Now this was very clever of him, for the lady-in-waiting could not possibly find the gate when there were crosses on all the gates.

Early next morning the king, and queen, the lady-in-waiting, and all the court officials went to see where the princess had been.

"There it is," said the king, when he saw the first door with the cross on it.

"No, my dear husband, it is there," said the queen, who saw another door with a cross on it.

"But there is one, and there is another!" they all cried out.

They soon saw that it was hopeless to try and find it.

Now the queen was a very clever woman; she knew more than how to drive in a chariot. She took her big gold scissors and cut up a large piece of silk into small pieces, and made a pretty little bag, which she filled with fine grains of buckwheat. She then tied it on the back of the princess, and when that was done, she cut a little hole in the bag, so that the grains could drop out all the way wherever the princess went.

At night the dog came again, took the princess on his back, and ran off with her to the soldier, who was so fond of her that he longed to be a prince, so that he might have her for his wife.

The dog never noticed how the grain dropped out all along the road from the palace to the soldier's window, where he ran up the wall with the princess.

In the morning the king and queen easily saw where their daughter had been, and they seized the soldier and threw him into the dungeons.

There he lay! Oh, how dark and tiresome it was, and then one day they said to him, "To-morrow you are to be hanged." It was not amusing to

be told that, especially as he had left his tinder box behind him at the hotel.

In the morning he could see through the bars in the little window that people were hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums and saw the soldiers go marching along. All the world was going; among them was a shoemaker's boy in his leather apron and slippers. He was in such a hurry that he lost one of his slippers, and it fell close under the soldier's window where he was peeping through the bars. "I say, you boy! Don't be in such a hurry," said the soldier to him. "Nothing will happen till I get there! But if you will run to the house where I used to live, and fetch me my tinder box, you shall have a penny!"

The boy was only too glad to have the penny, and tore off to get the tinder box, gave it to the soldier, and—yes, now we shall hear!

Outside the town a high scaffold had been raised, and the soldiers were drawn up round about it, as well as crowds of townspeople. The king and the queen sat upon a beautiful throne exactly opposite the judge and all the councillors.

The soldier mounted the ladder, but when they were about to put the rope round his neck, he said that, before undergoing his punishment, a criminal was always allowed the gratification of a harmless wish, and he wanted very much to smoke a pipe, as it would be his last pipe in this world.

The king could not deny him this, so the soldier took out his tinder box and struck fire, once, twice, three times, and there were all the dogs. The one with eyes like saucers, the one with eyes like millstones, and the one whose eyes were as big as the Round Tower.

"Help me! Save me from being hanged!" cried the soldier.

And then the dogs rushed at the soldiers and the councillors; they took one by the legs, and another by the nose, and threw them up many fathoms into the air; and when they fell down, they were all broken to pieces.

"I won't!" cried the king, but the biggest dog took both him and the queen and threw them after all the others. Then the soldiers became alarmed, and the people shouted, "Oh! good soldier, you shall be our king and marry the beautiful princess!"

So they conducted the soldier to the king's chariot, and all three dogs danced along in front of him and shouted "Hurrah!" The boys all put their fingers in their mouths and whistled, and the soldiers presented arms. The princess came out of the copper palace and became queen, which pleased her very much. The wedding took place in a week, and the dogs all had seats at the table, where they sat staring with all their eyes.

The Swineherd

THE SWINEHERD

THERE was once a poor prince; he had only a tiny kingdom, but it was big enough to allow him to marry, and he was bent upon marrying.

Now it certainly was rather bold of him to say to the emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" He did, however, venture to say so, for his name was known far and wide, and there were hundreds of princesses who would have said, "Yes," and "Thank you, kindly," but see if she would!

Just let us hear about it.

A rose tree grew on the grave of the prince's father, it was such a beautiful rose tree; it only bloomed every fifth year, and then only bore one blossom, but what a rose that was! By merely smelling it, one forgot all one's cares and sorrows.

Then he had a nightingale which sang as if every lovely melody in the world dwelt in her little throat. This rose and this nightingale were to be given to the princess, so they were put into great silver caskets and sent to her.

The emperor had them carried before him into the great hall where the princess was playing at "visiting" with her ladies-in-waiting; they had nothing else to do. When she saw the caskets with the gifts she clapped her hands with delight!

"If it were only a little pussy-cat!" said she,—but there was the lovely rose.

"Oh, how exquisitely it is made!" said all the ladies-in-waiting.

"It is more than beautiful," said the emperor; "it is neat."

But the princess touched it, and then she was ready to cry.

"Fie, papa!" she said. "It is not made, it is a real one!"

"Fie," said all the ladies-in-waiting. "It is a real one!"

"Well, let us see what there is in the other casket, before we get angry," said the Emperor, and out came the nightingale. It sang so beautifully that at first no one could find anything to say against it.

"*Superbe! charmant!*" said the ladies-in-waiting, for they all had a smattering of French, one spoke it worse than the other.

"How that bird reminds me of our lamented empress's musical box," said an old courtier. "Ah, yes, they are the same tunes, and the same beautiful execution."

"So they are," said the emperor, and he cried like a little child.

"I should hardly think it could be a real one," said the princess.

"Yes, it is a real one," said those who had brought it.

"Oh, let that bird fly away then," said the princess, and she would not hear of allowing the prince to come. But he was not to be crushed. He stained his face brown and black, and, pressing his cap over his eyes, he knocked at the door.

"Good-morning, Emperor," said he. "Can I be taken into service in the palace?"

"Well, there are so many wishing to do that," said the emperor, "but let me see!—yes, I need somebody to look after the pigs, for we have so many of them."

So the prince was made imperial swineherd. A horrid little room was given him near the pigsties, and here he had to live. He sat busily at work all day, and by the evening he had made a beautiful little cooking pot; it had bells all around it and when the pot boiled they tinkled delightfully and played the old tune:

"Ach du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!" [1]

[1] Alas, dear Augustin,
All is lost, lost, lost!

But the greatest charm of all about it was, that, by holding one's finger in the steam, one could immediately smell all the dinners that were being cooked at every stove in the town. Now this was a very different matter from a rose.

The princess came walking along with all her ladies-in-waiting, and when she heard the tune she stopped and looked pleased for she could play "du lieber Augustin" herself; it was her only tune, and she could only play it with one finger.

"Why, that is my tune," she said. "This must be a cultivated swineherd. Go and ask him what the instrument costs."

So one of the ladies-in-waiting had to go into his room, but she put pattens on first.

"How much do you want for the pot?" she asked.

"I must have ten kisses from the princess," said the swineherd.

"Heaven preserve us!" said the lady.

"I won't take less," said the swineherd.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the princess.

"I really cannot tell you," said the lady-in-waiting, "it is so shocking."

"Then you must whisper it." And she whispered it.

"He is a wretch!" said the princess, and went away at once. But she had only gone a little way when she heard the bells tinkling beautifully:

"Ach du lieber Augustin."

"Go and ask him if he will take ten kisses from the ladies-in-waiting."

"No, thank you," said the swineherd—"ten kisses from the princess, or I keep my pot."

"How tiresome it is," said the princess. "Then you will have to stand round me, so that no one may see."

So the ladies-in-waiting stood round her and spread out their skirts while the swineherd took his ten kisses, and then the pot was hers.

What a delight it was to them. The pot was kept on the boil day and night. They knew what was cooking on every stove in the town, from the chamberlain's to the shoemaker's. The ladies-in-waiting danced about and clapped their hands.

"We know who has sweet soup and pancakes for dinner, and who has cutlets! How amusing it is."

"Highly interesting," said the mistress of the robes.

"One must encourage art," she said. "I am the emperor's daughter."

"Heaven preserve us!" they all said.

The swineherd—that is to say, the prince, only nobody knew that he was not a real swineherd—did not let the day pass in idleness, and he now constructed a rattle. When it was swung round it

played all the waltzes, galops and jig tunes which have ever been heard since the creation of the world.

"But this is *superbe!*" said the princess, as she walked by. "I have never heard finer compositions. Go and ask him what the instrument costs, but let us have no more kissing."

"He wants a hundred kisses from the princess!" said the lady-in-waiting.

"I think he is mad!" said the princess, and she went away, but she had not gone far when she stopped.

"One must encourage art," she said. "I am the emperor's daughter. Tell him he can have ten kisses, the same as yesterday, and he can take the others from the ladies-in-waiting."

"But we don't like that at all," said the ladies.

"Oh, nonsense! If I can kiss him you can do the same. Remember that I pay you wages as well as give you board and lodging." So the lady-in-waiting had to go again.

"A hundred kisses from the princess, or let each keep his own."

"Stand in front of me," said she, and all the ladies stood around, while he kissed her.

"Whatever is the meaning of that crowd round the pigsties?" said the emperor, as he stepped out on to the veranda; he rubbed his eyes and put on his spectacles. "Why, it is the ladies-in-waiting,

what game are they up to? I must go and see!" so he pulled up the heels of his slippers for they were shoes which he had trodden down.

Bless us, what a hurry he was in! When he got into the yard, he walked very softly and the ladies were so busy counting the kisses, so that there should be fair play, and neither too few, nor too many kisses, that they never heard the emperor. He stood on tiptoe.

"What is all this?" he said when he saw what was going on, and he hit them on the head with his slipper just as the swineherd was taking his eighty-sixth kiss.

"Out you go!" said the emperor, for he was furious, and both the princess and the prince were put out of his realm.

There she stood crying, and the swineherd scolded, and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Oh, miserable creature that I am! If only I had accepted the handsome prince. Oh, how unhappy I am!"

The swineherd went behind a tree, wiped the black and brown stain from his face, and threw away his ugly clothes. When he stepped out dressed as a prince, he was so handsome that the princess could not help curtseying to him.

"I am come to despise thee," he said. "Thou wouldst not have an honorable prince, thou couldst not prize the rose, or the nightingale, but thou

wouldst kiss the swineherd for a trumpery musical box! As thou hast made thy bed, so must thou lie upon it!"

Then he went back into his own little kingdom and shut and locked the door. So she had to stand outside and sing in earnest—

"Ach du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!"

The Mermaid

THE MERMAID

FAR out at sea the water is as blue as the bluest cornflower, and as clear as the clearest crystal, but it is very deep, and if many steeples were piled on the top of one another they would not reach from the bed of the sea to the surface of the water. It is down there that the Mermen live.

The most wonderful trees and plants grow there, and such flexible stalks and leaves, that at the slightest motion of the water they move as if they were alive. All the fish, big and little, glide among the branches just as, up here, birds glide through the air. The palace of the Merman King lies in the very deepest part; its walls are of coral and the long pointed windows of clearest amber, but the roof is made of mussel shells which open and shut with the lapping of the water.

The Merman King had been for many years a widower, but his old mother kept house for him; she was a clever woman, but so proud of her noble birth that she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while

the other grandees were only allowed six. Otherwise she was worthy of all praise, especially because she was so fond of the little mermaid princesses, her grandchildren. They were six beautiful children, but the youngest was the prettiest of all, her skin was as soft and delicate as a roseleaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea, but like all the others she had no feet, and instead of legs she had a fish's tail.

All the livelong day they used to play in the palace in the great halls, where living flowers grew out of the walls. When the great amber windows were thrown open the fish swam in, just as the swallows fly into our rooms when we open the windows, but the fish swam right up to the little princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be patted.

Outside the palace was a large garden, with fiery red and deep blue trees, the fruit of which shone like gold, while the flowers glowed like fire on their ceaselessly waving stalks. The ground was of the finest sand, but it was of a blue phosphorescent tint. There was a wondrous blue light down there; you might suppose yourself high up in the air, with only the sky above and below you. In a dead calm you could just catch a glimpse of the sun like a purple flower with a stream of light radiating from its calyx.

Each little princess had her own little plot of

garden, where she could dig and plant whatever she liked. One made her flower-bed in the shape of a whale, another thought it nice to have hers like a little mermaid; but the youngest made hers quite round like the sun, and she would only have flowers of a rosy hue like its beams. She was a curious child, quiet and thoughtful, and while the other sisters decked out their gardens with all kinds of extraordinary objects which they got from wrecks, she would have nothing but the rosy flowers like the sun up above, except a statue of a beautiful boy. It was hewn out of the purest white marble and had gone to the bottom from some wreck.

Nothing gave her greater pleasure than to hear about the world of human beings up above; she made her old grandmother tell her all that she knew about ships and towns, people and animals. But above all it seemed strangely beautiful to her that up on the earth the flowers were scented, and that the woods were green, and that the fish which were to be seen among the branches could sing so loudly and sweetly that it was a delight to listen to them. You see the grandmother called little birds fish, or the mermaids would not have understood her, as they had never seen a bird.

"When you are fifteen," said the grandmother, "you will be allowed to rise up from the sea and sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and look at the

big ships sailing by, and you will also see woods and towns."

One of the sisters would be fifteen in the following year, but the others,—well, they were each one year younger than the other, so that the youngest had five whole years to wait before she would be allowed to come up from the bottom, to see what things were like on earth. But each one promised the others to give a full account of all that she had seen, and found most wonderful on the first day. Their grandmother could never tell them enough, for there were so many things about which they wanted information.

None of them was so full of longings as the youngest, the very one who had the longest time to wait, and who was so quiet and dreamy. Many a night she stood by the open windows and looked up through the dark blue water which the fish were lashing with their tails and fins. She could see the moon and the stars; it is true, their light was pale but they looked much bigger through the water than they do to our eyes. When she saw a dark shadow glide between her and them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming above her, or else a ship laden with human beings. I am certain they never dreamed that a lovely little mermaid was standing down below, stretching up her white hands towards the keel.

The eldest princess had now reached her fif-

teenth birthday, and was to venture above the water. When she came back she had hundreds of things to tell them, but the most delightful of all, she said, was to lie in the moonlight on a sandbank in a calm sea, and to gaze at the large town close to the shore, where the lights twinkled like hundreds of stars; to listen to music and the noise and bustle of carriages and people, to see the many church towers and spires, and to hear the bells ringing; and just because she could not go on shore she longed for that most of all.

Oh! how eagerly the youngest sister listened, and when, later in the evening she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark blue water, she thought of the big town with all its noise and bustle, and fancied that she could even hear the church bells ringing.

The year after, the second sister was allowed to mount up through the water and swim about wherever she liked. The sun was just going down when she reached the surface, the most beautiful sight, she thought, that she had ever seen. The whole sky had looked like gold, she said, and as for the clouds! well, their beauty was beyond description, they floated in red and violet splendor over her head, and, far faster than they went, a flock of wild swans flew like a long white veil over the water towards the setting sun; she swam towards it, but

it sank and all the rosy light on the clouds and water faded away.

The year after that the third sister went up, and being much the most venturesome of them all, swam up a broad river which ran into the sea. She saw beautiful green, vine-clad hills; palaces and country seats peeping through splendid woods. She heard the birds singing, and the sun was so hot that she was often obliged to dive to cool her burning face. In a tiny bay she found a troop of little children running about naked and paddling in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they were frightened and ran away. Then a little black animal came up, it was a dog, but she had never seen one before; it barked so furiously at her that she was frightened and made for the open sea. She could never forget the beautiful woods, the green hills and the lovely children who could swim in the water although they had no fishes' tails.

The fourth sister was not so brave, she stayed in the remotest part of the ocean, and, according to her account, that was the most beautiful spot. You could see for miles and miles around you, and the sky above was like a great glass dome. She had seen ships, but only far away, so that they looked like sea-gulls. There were grotesque dolphins turning somersaults, and gigantic whales squirting water through their nostrils like hundreds of fountains on every side.

Now the fifth sister's turn came. Her birthday fell in the winter, so that she saw sights that the others had not seen on their first trips. The sea looked quite green, and large icebergs were floating about, each one of which looked like a pearl, she said, but was much bigger than the church towers built by men. They took the most wonderful shapes, and sparkled like diamonds. She had seated herself on one of the largest, and all the passing ships sheered off in alarm when they saw her sitting there with her long hair streaming loose in the wind.

In the evening the sky became overcast with dark clouds; it thundered and lightened, and the huge icebergs, glittering in the bright lightning, were lifted high into the air by the black waves. All the ships shortened sail, and there was fear and trembling on every side, but she sat quietly on her floating iceberg watching the blue lightning flash in zigzags down on to the shining sea.

The first time any of the sisters rose above the water she was delighted by the novelties and beauties she saw; but once grown up, and at liberty to go where she liked, she became indifferent and longed for her home; in the course of a month or so they all said that after all their own home in the deep was best, it was so cozy there.

Many an evening the five sisters interlacing their arms would rise above the water together.

They had lovely voices, much clearer than any mortal, and when a storm was rising, and they expected ships to be wrecked, they would sing in the most seductive strains of the wonders of the deep, bidding the seafarers have no fear of them. But the sailors could not understand the words, they thought it was the voice of the storm; nor could it be theirs to see this Elysium of the deep, for when the ship sank they were drowned, and only reached the Merman's palace in death. When the elder sisters rose up in this manner, arm-in-arm, in the evening, the youngest remained behind quite alone, looking after them as if she must weep, but mermaids have no tears and so they suffer all the more.

"Oh! if I were only fifteen!" she said, "I know how fond I shall be of the world above, and of the mortals who dwell there."

At last her fifteenth birthday came.

"Now we shall have you off our hands," said her grandmother, the old queen dowager. "Come now, let me adorn you like your other sisters!" and she put a wreath of white lilies round her hair, but every petal of the flowers was half a pearl; then the old queen had eight oysters fixed on to the princess's tail to show her high rank.

"But it hurts so!" said the little mermaid.

"You must endure the pain for the sake of the finery!" said her grandmother.

But oh! how gladly would she have shaken off all this splendor, and laid aside the heavy wreath. Her red flowers in her garden suited her much better, but she did not dare to make any alteration. "Good-by," she said, and mounted as lightly and airily as a bubble through the water.

The sun had just set when her head rose above the water, but the clouds were still lighted up with a rosy and golden splendor, and the evening star sparkled in the soft pink sky, the air was mild and fresh, and the sea as calm as a millpond. A big three-masted ship lay close by with only a single sail set, for there was not a breath of wind, and the sailors were sitting about the rigging, on the cross-trees, and at the mastheads. There was music and singing on board, and as the evening closed in, hundreds of gaily colored lanterns were lighted—they looked like the flags of all nations waving in the air. The little mermaid swam right up to the cabin windows, and every time she was lifted by the swell she could see through the transparent panes crowds of gaily dressed people. The handsomest of them all was a young prince with large dark eyes; he could not be much more than sixteen, and all these festivities were in honor of his birthday. The sailors danced on deck, and when the prince appeared among them hundreds of rockets were let off making it as light as day, and frightening the little mermaid so much that she

had to dive under the water. She soon ventured up again, and it was just as if all the stars of heaven were falling in showers round about her. She had never seen such magic fires. Great suns whirled round, gorgeous fire-fish hung in the blue air, and all was reflected in the calm and glassy sea. It was so light on board the ship that every little rope could be seen, and the people still better. Oh! how handsome the prince was, how he laughed and smiled as he greeted his guests, while the music rang out in the quiet night.

It got quite late, but the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship and the beautiful prince. The colored lanterns were put out, no more rockets were sent up, and the cannon had ceased its thunder, but deep down in the sea there was a dull murmuring and moaning sound. Meanwhile she was rocked up and down on the waves, so that she could look into the cabin; but the ship got more and more way on, sail after sail was filled by the wind, the waves grew stronger, great clouds gathered, and it lightened in the distance. Oh, there was going to be a fearful storm! and soon the sailors had to shorten sail. The great ship rocked and rolled as she dashed over the angry sea, the black waves rose like mountains, high enough to overwhelm her, but she dived like a swan through them and rose again and again on their towering crests. The little mermaid thought it a most amus-

ing race, but not so the sailors. The ship creaked and groaned, the mighty timbers bulged and bent under the heavy blows, the water broke over the decks, snapping the mainmast like a reed; she heeled over on her side and the water rushed into the hold.

Now the little mermaid saw that they were in danger and she had for her own sake to beware of the floating beams and wreckage. One moment it was so pitch dark that she could not see at all, but when the lightning flashed it became so light that she could see all on board. Every man was looking out for his own safety as best he could, but she more particularly followed the young prince with her eyes, and when the ship went down she saw him sink in the deep sea. At first she was quite delighted, for now he was coming to be with her, but then she remembered that human beings could not live under water, and that only if he were dead could he go to her father's palace. No! he must not die; so she swam towards him all among the drifting beams and planks, quite forgetting that they might crush her. She dived deep down under the water, and came up again through the waves, and at last reached the young prince just as he was becoming unable to swim any further in the stormy sea. His limbs were numbed, his beautiful eyes were closing, and he must have died if the little mermaid had not come to the rescue. She

held his head above the water and let the waves drive them whithersoever they would.

By daybreak all the storm was over, of the ship not a trace was to be seen; the sun rose from the water in radiant brilliance and his rosy beams seemed to cast a glow of life into the prince's cheeks, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his fair brow, and stroked back the dripping hair; it seemed to her that he was like the marble statue in her little garden, she kissed him again and longed that he might live.

At last she saw dry land before her, high blue mountains on whose summits the white snow glistened as if a flock of swans had settled there; down by the shore were beautiful green woods, and in the foreground a church or temple, she did not quite know which, but it was a building of some sort. Lemon and orange trees grew in the garden and lofty palms stood by the gate. At this point the sea formed a little bay where the water was quite calm, but very deep, right up to the cliffs; at their foot was a strip of fine white sand to which she swam with the beautiful prince, and laid him down on it, taking great care that his head should rest high up in the warm sunshine.

The bells now began to ring in the great white building and a number of young maidens came into the garden. Then the little mermaid swam further off behind some high rocks and covered

her hair and breast with foam, so that no one should see her little face, and then she watched to see who would discover the poor prince.

It was not long before one of the maidens came up to him; at first she seemed quite frightened, but only for a moment, and then she fetched several others, and the mermaid saw that the prince was coming to life, and that he smiled at all those around him, but he never smiled at her; you see he did not know that she had saved him; she felt so sad that when he was led away into the great building she dived sorrowfully into the water and made her way home to her father's palace.

Always silent and thoughtful, she became more so now than ever. Her sisters often asked her what she had seen on her first visit to the surface, but she never would tell them anything.

Many an evening and many a morning she would rise to the place where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden ripen, and then gathered, she saw the snow melt on the mountain-tops, but she never saw the prince, so she always went home still sadder than before. At home her only consolation was to sit in her little garden with her arms twined round the handsome marble statue which reminded her of the prince. It was all in gloomy shade now, as she had ceased to tend her flowers and the garden had become a

neglected wilderness of long stalks and leaves entangled with the branches of the tree.

At last she could not bear it any longer, so she told one of her sisters, and from her it soon spread to the others, but to no one else except to one or two other mermaids who only told their dearest friends. One of these knew all about the prince, she had also seen the festivities on the ship; she knew where he came from and where his kingdom was situated.

"Come, little sister!" said the other princesses, and, throwing their arms round each other's shoulders, they rose from the water in a long line, just in front of the prince's palace.

It was built of light yellow glistening stone, with great marble staircases, one of which led into the garden. Magnificent gilded cupolas rose above the roof, and the spaces between the columns which encircled the building were filled with life-like marble statues. Through the clear glass of the lofty windows you could see gorgeous halls adorned with costly silken hangings, and the pictures on the walls were a sight worth seeing. In the midst of the central hall a large fountain played, throwing its jets of spray upwards to a glass dome in the roof, through which the sunbeams lighted up the water and the beautiful plants which grew in the great basin.

She knew now where he lived and often used to

HER ONLY CONSOLATION WAS THE HANDSOME STATUE

go there in the evenings and by night over the water; she swam much nearer the land than any of the others dared, she even ventured right up the narrow channel under the splendid marble terrace which threw a long shadow over the water. She used to sit here looking at the young prince who thought he was quite alone in the clear moonlight.

She saw him many an evening sailing about in his beautiful boat, with flags waving and music playing, she used to peep through the green rushes, and if the wind happened to catch her long silvery veil and anyone saw it, they only thought it was a swan flapping its wings.

Many a night she heard the fishermen, who were fishing by torchlight, talking over the good deeds of the young prince; and she was happy to think that she had saved his life when he was drifting about on the waves, half dead, and she could not forget how closely his head had pressed her breast, and how passionately she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of all this, and never saw her even in his dreams.

She became fonder and fonder of mankind, and longed more and more to be able to live among them; their world seemed so infinitely bigger than hers; with their ships they could scour the ocean, they could ascend the mountains high above the clouds, and their wooded, grass-grown lands extended further than her eye could reach. There

was so much that she wanted to know, but her sisters could not give an answer to all her questions, so she asked her old grandmother who knew the upper world well, and rightly called it the country above the sea.

"If men are not drowned," asked the little mermaid, "do they live forever, do they not die as we do down here in the sea?"

"Yes," said the old lady, "they have to die too, and their lifetime is even shorter than ours. We may live here for three hundred years, but when we cease to exist, we become mere foam on the water and do not have so much as a grave among our dear ones. We have no immortal souls, we have no future life, we are just like the green seaweed, which, once cut down, can never revive again! Men, on the other hand, have a soul which lives forever, lives after the body has become dust; it rises through the clear air, up to the shining stars! Just as we rise from the water to see the land of mortals, so they rise up to unknown beautiful regions which we shall never see."

"Why have we no immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid sadly. "I would give all my three hundred years to be a human being for one day, and afterwards to have a share in the heavenly kingdom."

"You must not be thinking about that," said the

grandmother; "we are much better off and happier than human beings."

"Then I shall have to die and to float as foam on the water, and never hear the music of the waves or see the beautiful flowers or the red sun! Is there nothing I can do to gain an immortal soul?"

"No," said the grandmother, "only if a human being so loved you, that you were more to him than father or mother, if all his thoughts and all his love were so centered in you that he would let the priest join your hands and would vow to be faithful to you here, and to all eternity; then your body would become infused with his soul. Thus and only thus, could you gain a share in the felicity of mankind. He would give you a soul while yet keeping his own. But that can never happen! That which is your greatest beauty in the sea, your fish's tail, is thought hideous up on earth, so little do they understand about it; to be pretty there you must have two clumsy supports which they call legs!"

Then the little mermaid sighed and looked sadly at her fish's tail.

"Let us be happy," said the grandmother, "we will hop and skip during our three hundred years of life, it is surely a long enough time, and after it is over, we shall rest all the better in our graves. There is to be a court ball to-night."

This was a much more splendid affair than we ever see on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the

great ballroom were of thick but transparent glass. Several hundreds of colossal mussel shells, rose-red and grass-green, were ranged in order round the sides holding blue lights, which illuminated the whole room and shone through the walls, so that the sea outside was quite lit up. You could see countless fish, great and small, swimming towards the glass walls, some with shining scales of crimson hue, while others were golden and silvery. In the middle of the room was a broad stream of running water, and on this the mermaids and mermen danced to their own beautiful singing. No earthly beings have such lovely voices. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than any of them and they all applauded her. For a moment she felt glad at heart, for she knew that she had the finest voice either in the sea or on land. But she soon began to think again about the upper world, she could not forget the handsome prince and her sorrow in not possessing, like him, an immortal soul. Therefore she stole out of her father's palace, and while all within was joy and merriment, she sat sadly in her little garden. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horn through the water, and she thought, "Now he is out sailing up there; he whom I love more than father or mother, he to whom my thoughts cling and to whose hands I am ready to commit the happiness of my life. I will dare anything to win him and to gain an immortal soul! While my sis-

ters are dancing in my father's palace, I will go to the sea witch of whom I have always been very much afraid, she will perhaps be able to advise and help me!"

Thereupon the little mermaid left the garden and went towards the roaring whirlpools at the back of which the witch lived. She had never been that way before; no flowers grew there, no seaweed, only the bare gray sands, stretched towards the whirlpools, which like rushing millwheels swirled round, dragging everything that came within reach down to the depths. She had to pass between these boiling eddies to reach the witches' domain, and for a long way the only path led over warm bubbling mud, which the witch called her "peat bog." Her house stood behind this in the midst of a weird forest. All the trees and bushes were polyps, half animal and half plant; they looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the sand, the branches were long slimy arms, with tentacles like wriggling worms, every joint of which from the root to the outermost tip was in constant motion. They wound themselves tightly round whatever they could lay hold of and never let it escape. The little mermaid standing outside was quite frightened, her heart beat fast with terror and she nearly turned back, but then she remembered the prince and the immortal soul of mankind and took courage. She bound her long

flowing hair tightly round her head, so that the polyps should not seize her by it, folded her hands over her breast, and darted like a fish through the water, in between the hideous polyps which stretched out their sensitive arms and tentacles towards her. She could see that every one of them had something or other, which they had grasped with their hundred arms, and which they held as if in iron bands. The bleached bones of men who had perished at sea and sunk below peeped forth from the arms of some, while others clutched rudders and sea chests, or the skeleton of some land animal; and most horrible of all, a little mermaid whom they had caught and suffocated. Then she came to a large opening in the wood where the ground was all slimy, and where some huge fat water snakes were gamboling about. In the middle of this opening was a house built of the bones of the wrecked; there sat the witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth, just as mortals let a little canary eat sugar. She called the hideous water snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl about on her unsightly bosom.

"I know very well what you have come here for," said the witch. "It is very foolish of you! All the same you shall have your way, because it will lead you into misfortune, my fine princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail, and instead to have two stumps to walk about upon like human

beings, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may win him and an immortal soul." Saying this, she gave such a loud hideous laugh that the toad and snakes fell to the ground and wriggled about there.

"ONCE YOU HAVE RECEIVED A HUMAN FORM, YOU CAN NEVER BE A MERMAID AGAIN"

"You are just in the nick of time," said the witch; "after sunrise tomorrow I should not be able to help you until another year had run its course. I will make you a potion, and before sunrise you must swim ashore with it, seat yourself on the beach and drink it; then your tail will divide and shrivel up to what men call beautiful legs, but it hurts, it is as if a sharp sword were running through you. All who see you will say that you are the most beautiful child of man they have ever seen. You will keep your gliding gait, no dancer will rival you, but every step you take will be as if you were tread-

ing upon sharp knives, so sharp as to draw blood. If you are willing to suffer all this I am ready to help you!"

"Yes!" said the little princess with a trembling voice, thinking of the prince and of winning an undying soul.

"But remember," said the witch, "when once you have received a human form, you can never be a mermaid again, you will never again be able to dive down through the water to your sisters and to your father's palace. And if you do not succeed in winning the prince's love, so that for your sake he will forget father and mother, cleave to you with his whole heart, let the priest join your hands and make you man and wife, you will gain no immortal soul! The first morning after his marriage with another your heart will break, and you will turn into foam of the sea."

"I will do it," said the little mermaid as pale as death.

"But you will have to pay me, too," said the witch, "and it is no trifle that I demand. You have the most beautiful voice of any at the bottom of the sea, and I daresay that you think you will fascinate him with it, but you must give me that voice. I will have the best you possess in return for my precious potion! I have to mingle my own blood with it so as to make it as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

"Your beautiful form," said the witch, "your gliding gait, and your speaking eyes, with these you ought surely to be able to bewitch a human heart. Well! have you lost courage? Put out your little tongue and I will cut it off in payment for the powerful draught."

"Let it be done," said the little mermaid, and the witch put on her cauldron to brew the magic potion. "There is nothing like cleanliness," said she, as she scoured the pot with a bundle of snakes; then she punctured her breast and let the black blood drop into the cauldron, and the steam took the most weird shape, enough to frighten anyone. Every moment the witch threw new ingredients into the pot, and when it boiled the bubbling was like the sound of crocodiles weeping. At last the potion was ready and it looked like the clearest water.

"There it is," said the witch, and thereupon she cut off the tongue of the little mermaid, who was dumb now and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polyps should seize you, when you go back through my wood," said the witch, "just drop a single drop of this liquid on them, and their arms and fingers will burst into a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need to do this, for at the mere sight of the bright liquid which

sparkled in her hand like a shining star, they drew back in terror. So she soon got past the wood, the bog, and the eddying whirlpools.

She saw her father's palace, the lights were all out in the great ballroom, and no doubt all the household was asleep, but she did not dare to go in now that she was dumb and about to leave her home forever. She felt as if her heart would break with grief. She stole into the garden and plucked a flower from each of her sister's plots, wafted with her hand countless kisses towards the palace, and then rose up through the dark blue water.

The sun had not risen when she came in sight of the prince's palace and landed at the beautiful marble steps. The moon was shining bright and clear. The little mermaid drank the burning, stinging draught, and it was like a sharp, two-edged sword running through her tender frame; she fainted away and lay as if she were dead. When the sun rose on the sea she woke up and became conscious of a sharp pang, but just in front of her stood the handsome young prince, fixing his coal black eyes on her; she saw that her fish's tail was gone, and that she had the prettiest little white legs any maiden could desire, but she was quite naked, so she wrapped her long thick hair around her. The prince asked who she was and how she came there, she looked at him tenderly and with a sad expression in her dark blue eyes, but could not

speak. Then he took her by the hand and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her beforehand, as if she were treading on sharp knives and spikes but she bore it gladly; led by the prince she moved as lightly as a bubble, and he and everyone else marveled at her graceful gliding gait.

Clothed in the costliest silks and muslins she was the greatest beauty in the palace, but she was dumb and could neither sing nor speak. Beautiful slaves clad in silks and gold came forward and sang to the prince and his royal parents; one of them sang better than all the others, and the prince clapped his hands and smiled at her; that made the little mermaid very sad, for she knew that she used to sing far better herself. She thought, "Oh! if he only knew that for the sake of being with him I had given up my voice forever!" Now the slaves began to dance, graceful undulating dances to enchanting music; thereupon the little mermaid lifting her beautiful white arms and raising herself on tiptoe glided on the floor with a grace which none of the other dancers had yet attained. With every motion her grace and beauty became more apparent, and her eyes appealed more deeply to the heart than the songs of the slaves. Everyone was delighted with it, especially the prince, who called her his foundling, and she danced on and on, notwithstanding that every time her foot touched the

ground it was like treading on sharp knives. The prince said that she should always be near him, and she was allowed to sleep outside his door on a velvet cushion.

He had a man's dress made for her, so that she could ride about with him. They used to ride through scented woods, where the green branches brushed her shoulders, and little birds sang among the fresh leaves. She climbed up the highest mountains with the prince, and although her delicate feet bled so that others saw it, she only laughed and followed him until they saw the clouds sailing below them like a flock of birds, taking flight to distant lands.

At home in the prince's palace, when at night the others were asleep, she used to go out on to the marble steps; it cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea water, and at such times she used to think of those she had left in the deep.

One night her sisters came arm in arm; they sang so sorrowfully as they swam on the water that she beckoned to them and they recognized her, and told her how she had grieved them all. After that they visited her every night, and one night she saw, a long way out, her old grandmother (who for many years had not been above the water), and the Merman King with his crown on his head; they stretched out their hands towards her, but did not venture so close to land as her sisters.

Day by day she became dearer to the prince, he loved her as one loves a good sweet child, but it never entered his head to make her his queen; yet unless she became his wife she would never win an everlasting soul, but on his wedding morning would turn to sea foam.

"Am I not dearer to you than any of them?" the little mermaid's eyes seemed to say when he took her in his arms and kissed her beautiful brow.

"Yes, you are the dearest one to me," said the prince, "for you have the best heart of them all, and you are fondest of me; you are also like a young girl I once saw, but whom I never expect to see again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked, I was driven on shore by the waves close to a holy Temple where several young girls were ministering at a service; the youngest of them found me on the beach and saved my life; I saw her but twice. She was the only person I could love in this world, but you are like her, you almost drive her image out of my heart. She belongs to the holy Temple, and therefore by good fortune you have been sent to me, we will never part!"

"Alas! he does not know that it was I who saved his life," thought the little mermaid. "I bore him over the sea to the wood, where the Temple stands. I sat behind the foam and watched to see if anyone would come. I saw the pretty girl he loves better

than me." And the mermaid heaved a bitter sigh, for she could not weep.

"The girl belongs to the holy Temple, he has said, she will never return to the world, they will never meet again, I am here with him, I see him every day. Yes! I will tend him, love him, and give up my life to him."

But now the rumor ran that the prince was to be married to the beautiful daughter of a neighboring king, and for that reason was fitting out a splendid ship. It was given out that the prince was going on a voyage to see the adjoining countries, but it was without doubt to see the king's daughter; he was to have a great suite with him, but the little mermaid shook her head and laughed; she knew the prince's intentions much better than any of the others. "I must take this voyage," he had said to her; "I must go and see the beautiful princess; my parents demand that, but they will never force me to bring her home as my bride; I can never love her! She will not be like the lovely girl in the Temple whom you resemble. If ever I had to choose a bride it would sooner be you with your speaking eyes, my sweet, dumb foundling!" And he kissed her rosy mouth, played with her long hair, and laid his head upon her heart, which already dreamed of human joys and an immortal soul.

"You are not frightened of the sea, I suppose,

my dumb child?" he said, as they stood on the proud ship which was to carry them to the country of the neighboring king; and he told her about storms and calms, about curious fish in the deep, and the marvels seen by divers; and she smiled at his tales, for she knew all about the bottom of the sea much better than anyone else.

At night, in the moonlight, when all were asleep, except the steersman who stood at the helm, she sat at the side of the ship trying to pierce the clear water with her eyes, and fancied she saw her father's palace, and above it her old grandmother with her silver crown on her head, looking up through the cross currents towards the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose above the water, they gazed sadly at her, wringing their white hands; she beckoned to them, smiled, and was about to tell them that all was going well and happily with her, when the cabin boy approached, and the sisters dived down, but he supposed that the white objects he had seen were nothing but flakes of foam.

The next morning the ship entered the harbor of the neighboring king's magnificent city. The church bells rang and trumpets were sounded from every lofty tower, while the soldiers paraded with flags flying and glittering bayonets. There was a fête every day, there was a succession of balls, and receptions followed one after the other, but the princess was not yet present, she was being brought

up a long way off, in a holy Temple they said, and was learning all the royal virtues. At last she came. The little mermaid stood eager to see her beauty, she was obliged to confess that a lovelier creature she had never beheld. Her complexion was exquisitely pure and delicate, and her trustful eyes of the deepest blue shone through their dark lashes.

"It is you," said the prince, "you who saved me when I lay almost lifeless on the beach?" and he clasped his blushing bride to his heart. "Oh! I am too happy!" he exclaimed to the little mermaid.

"A greater joy than I had dared to hope for has come to pass. You will rejoice at my joy, for you love me better than anyone." Then the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt as if her heart were broken already.

His wedding morn would bring death to her and change her to foam.

All the church bells pealed and heralds rode through the town proclaiming the nuptials. Upon every altar throughout the land fragrant oil was burned in costly silver lamps. Amidst the swinging of censers by the priests, the bride and bridegroom joined hands and received the bishop's blessing. The little mermaid dressed in silk and gold stood holding the bride's train, but her ears were deaf to the festal strains, her eyes saw nothing of the sacred ceremony, she was thinking of her

coming death and of all that she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom embarked, amidst the roar of cannon and the waving of banners. A royal tent of purple and gold softly cushioned was raised amidships where the bridal pair were to repose during the cool night.

The sails swelled in the wind and the ship skimmed lightly and almost without motion over the transparent sea.

At dusk lanterns of many colors were lighted and the sailors danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could not help thinking of the first time she came up from the sea and saw the same splendor and gayety; and she now threw herself among the dancers, whirling, as a swallow skims through the air when pursued. The onlookers cheered her in amazement, never had she danced so divinely; her delicate feet pained her as if they were cut with knives, but she did not feel it, for the pain at her heart was much sharper. She knew that it was the last night that she would breathe the same air as he, and would look upon the mighty deep, and the blue starry heavens; an endless night without thought and without dreams awaited her, who neither had a soul, nor could win one. The joy and revelry on board lasted till long past midnight, she went on laughing and dancing with the thought of death all the time in her heart. The

prince caressed his lovely bride and she played with his raven locks, and with their arms entwined they retired to the gorgeous tent. All became hushed and still on board the ship, only the steersman stood at the helm, the little mermaid laid her white arms on the gunwale and looked eastwards for the pink tinted dawn; the first sunbeam, she knew would be her death. Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale as she was, their beautiful long hair no longer floated on the breeze, for it had been cut off.

"We have given it to the witch to obtain her help, so that you may not die to-night! she has given us a knife, here it is, look how sharp it is! Before the sun rises, you must plunge it into the prince's heart, and when his warm blood sprinkles your feet they will join together and grow into a tail, and you will once more be a mermaid; you will be able to come down into the water to us, and to live out your three hundred years before you are turned into dead, salt, sea-foam. Make haste! you or he must die before sunrise! Our old grandmother is so full of grief that her white hair has fallen off as ours fell under the witch's scissors. Slay the prince and come back to us! Quick! Quick! do you not see the rosy streak in the sky? In a few moments the sun will rise and then you must die!" saying this they heaved a wondrous deep sigh and sank among the waves.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtain from the tent and looked at the beautiful bride asleep with her head on the prince's breast; she bent over him and kissed his fair brow, looked at the sky where the dawn was spreading fast; looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes on the prince who, in his dream called his bride by name, yes she alone was in his thoughts!—For a moment the knife quivered in her grasp, then she threw it far out among the waves now rosy in the morning light and where it fell the water bubbled up like drops of blood.

Once more she looked at the prince, with her eyes already dimmed by death, then dashed overboard and fell, her body dissolving into foam.

Now the sun rose from the sea and with its kindly beams warmed the deadly cold foam, so that the little mermaid did not feel the chill of death. She saw the bright sun and above her floated hundreds of beauteous ethereal beings through which she could see the white ship and the rosy heavens, their voices were melodious but so spirit-like that no human ear could hear them, any more than an earthly eye could see their forms. Light as bubbles they floated through the air without the aid of wings. The little mermaid perceived that she had a form like theirs, it gradually took shape out of the foam. "To whom am I coming?" said she, and her voice sounded like that of the other beings,

so unearthly in its beauty that no music of ours could reproduce it.

"To the daughters of the air!" answered the others; "a mermaid has no undying soul, and can never gain one without winning the love of a human being. Her eternal life must depend upon an unknown power. Nor have the daughters of the air an everlasting soul, but by their own good deeds they may create one for themselves. We fly to the tropics where mankind is the victim of hot and pestilent winds, there we bring cooling breezes. We diffuse the scent of flowers all around, and bring refreshment and healing in our train. When, for three hundred years, we have labored to do all the good in our power we gain an undying soul and take a part in the everlasting joys of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have with your whole heart, struggled for the same thing as we have struggled for. You have suffered and endured, raised yourself to the spirit world of the air; and now, by your own good deeds you may, in the course of three hundred years, work out for yourself an undying soul."

Then the little mermaid lifted her transparent arms towards God's sun, and for the first time shed tears.

On board ship all was again life and bustle, she saw the prince with his lovely bride searching for her, they looked sadly at the bubbling foam, as if

they knew that she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen she kissed the bride on her brow, smiled at the prince and rose aloft with the other spirits of the air to the rosy clouds which sailed above.

"In three hundred years we shall thus float into Paradise."

"We might reach it sooner," whispered one. "Unseen we flit into those homes of men where there are children, and for every day that we find a good child who gives pleasure to its parents and deserves their love, God shortens our time of probation. The child does not know when we fly through the room, and when we smile with pleasure at it, one year of our three hundred is taken away. But if we see a naughty or badly disposed child, we cannot help shedding tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."

The Emperor's New Clothes

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

MANY years ago there was an emperor who was so very fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them. He cared nothing about his soldiers nor about the theater, nor for driving in the woods except for the sake of showing off his new clothes. He had a costume for every hour in the day, and instead of saying as one does about any other king or emperor, "He is in his council chamber," they always said, "The emperor is in his dressing-room."

Life was very gay in the great town where he lived; hosts of strangers came to visit it every day. Among the visitors one day came two swindlers. They gave themselves out as weavers, and said that they knew how to weave the most beautiful stuffs imaginable. Not only were the colors and patterns unusually fine, but the clothes that were made of the cloth had the peculiar quality of becoming invisible to anyone who was not fit for the office he held, or who was impossibly dull.

"Those must be splendid clothes," thought the emperor. "By wearing them I should be able to discover which men in my kingdom are unfitted for their posts. I shall distinguish the wise men from the fools. Yes, I certainly must order some of that stuff to be woven for me."

He paid the two swindlers a lot of money in advance, so that they might begin their work at once.

They did put up two looms and pretended to weave, but they had nothing whatever upon their shuttles. At the outset they asked for a quantity of the finest silk and the purest gold thread, all of which they put into their own bags while they worked away at the empty looms far into the night.

"I should like to know how those weavers are getting on with the stuff," thought the emperor; but he felt a little queer when he reflected that anyone who was stupid or unfit for his post would not be able to see it. He certainly thought that he need have no fears for himself, but still he thought he would send somebody else first to see how it was getting on. Everybody in the town knew what wonderful power the cloth possessed, and everyone was anxious to see how stupid his neighbor was.

"I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers," thought the emperor. "He will be best able to see how the stuff looks, for he is a clever

man and no one fulfills his duties better than he does!"

So the good old minister went into the room where the two swindlers sat working at the empty loom.

"Heaven preserve us!" thought the old minister, opening his eyes very wide. "Why I can't see a thing!" But he took care not to say so.

Both the swindlers begged him to be good enough to step a little nearer, and asked if he did not think it a good pattern and beautiful coloring. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister stared as hard as he could, but he could not see anything, for of course there was nothing to see.

"Good heavens!" thought he, "is it possible that I am a fool? I have never thought so, and nobody must know it. Am I not fit for my post? It will never do to say that I cannot see the cloths."

"Well, sir, you don't say anything about the stuff," said the one who was pretending to weave.

"Oh, it is beautiful! quite charming!" said the minister looking through his spectacles; "this pattern and these colors! I will certainly tell the emperor that the stuff pleases me very much."

"We are delighted to hear you say so," said the swindlers, and then they named all the colors and described the peculiar pattern. The old minister paid great attention to what they said, so as to be

able to repeat it when he got home to the emperor.

Then the swindlers went on to demand more money, more silk, and more gold, to be able to proceed with the weaving, and they put it all into their own pockets—not a single strand was ever put into the loom, but they went on as before weaving at the empty loom.

The emperor soon sent another faithful official to see how the stuff was getting on, and if it would soon be ready. The same thing happened to him as to the minister; he looked and looked, but as there was only the empty loom, he could see nothing at all.

"Is not this a beautiful piece of stuff?" said both the swindlers, showing and explaining the beautiful pattern and colors which were not there to be seen.

"I know I am no fool!" thought the man, "so it must be that I am unfit for my good post! It is very strange though! however one must not let it appear!" So he praised the stuff he did not see, and assured them of his delight in the beautiful colors and the originality of the design. "It is absolutely charming!" he said to the emperor. Everybody in the town was talking about this splendid stuff.

Now the emperor thought he would like to see it while it was still on the loom. So, accompanied

"WELL, I AM QUITE READY," SAID THE EMPEROR

by a number of selected courtiers, among whom were the two faithful officials who had already seen the imaginary stuff, he went to visit the crafty impostors, who were working away as hard as ever they could at the empty loom.

"It is magnificent!" said both the honest officials. "Only see, your Majesty, what a design! What colors!" And they pointed to the empty loom, for they thought no doubt the others could see the stuff.

"What!" thought the emperor; "I see nothing at all! This is terrible! Am I a fool? Am I not fit to be emperor? Why, nothing worse could happen to me!"

"Oh, it is beautiful!" said the emperor. "It has my highest approval!" and he nodded his satisfaction as he gazed at the empty loom. Nothing would make him say that he could not see anything.

The whole suite gazed and gazed, but saw nothing more than all the others. However, they all exclaimed with his Majesty, "It is very beautiful!" and they advised him to wear a suit made of this wonderful cloth on the occasion of a great procession which was just about to take place.

"It is magnificent! gorgeous! excellent!" went from mouth to mouth. They were all equally delighted with it. The emperor gave each of the

rogues an order of knighthood to be worn in their buttonholes and the title of " Gentlemen weavers."

The swindlers sat up the whole night, before the day on which the procession was to take place, burning sixteen candles; so that people might see how anxious they were to get the emperor's new clothes ready. They pretended to take the stuff off the loom. They cut it out in the air with a huge pair of scissors, and they stitched away with needles without any thread in them. At last they said: "Now the emperor's new clothes are ready!"

The emperor, with his grandest courtiers, went to them himself, and both swindlers raised one arm in the air, as if they were holding something, and said: "See, these are the trousers, this is the coat, here is the mantle!" and so on. " It is as light as a spider's web. One might think one had nothing on, but that is the very beauty of it!"

" Yes!" said all the courtiers, but they could not see anything, for there was nothing to see.

" Will your Imperial Majesty be graciously pleased to take off your clothes," said the impostors, " so that we may put on the new ones, along here before the great mirror."

The emperor took off all his clothes, and the impostors pretended to give him one article of dress after the other, of the new ones which they had pretended to make. They pretended to fasten

something round his waist and to tie on the train, and the emperor turned round and round in front of the mirror.

"How well his Majesty looks in the new clothes! How becoming they are!" cried all the people around him. "What a design, and what colors! They are most gorgeous robes!"

"The canopy is waiting outside which is to be carried over your Majesty in the procession," said the master of the ceremonies.

"Well, I am quite ready," said the emperor. "Don't the clothes fit well?" and then he turned round again in front of the mirror, so that he should seem to be looking at his grand things.

The chamberlains who were to carry the train stooped and pretended to lift it from the ground with both hands, and they walked along with their hands in the air. They dared not let it appear that they could not see anything.

Then the emperor walked along in the procession under the gorgeous canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows exclaimed, "How beautiful the emperor's new clothes are! What a splendid train! And they fit to perfection!" Nobody would let it appear that he could see nothing, for then he would be proved unfit for his post, or else a fool.

None of the emperor's clothes had been so successful before.

"But he has got nothing on," said a little child.

"Oh, listen to the innocent," said its father. Then one person whispered to the other what the child had said. "He has nothing on! A child says he has nothing on!"

"But he has nothing on!" at last cried all the people.

The emperor writhed, for he knew it was true, but he thought "the procession must go on now," so he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains held up the invisible train.

Great Claus and Little Claus

GREAT CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS

IN a village there once lived two men of the self-same name. They were both called Claus, but one of them had four horses, and the other only had one; so to distinguish them people called the owner of the four horses "Great Claus," and he who had only one "Little Claus." Now I shall tell you what happened to them, for this is a true story.

Throughout the week Little Claus was obliged to plow for Great Claus, and to lend him his one horse; but once a week, on Sunday, Great Claus lent him all his four horses.

"Hurrah!" How Little Claus would smack his whip over all five, for they were as good as his own on that one day.

The sun shone brightly and the church bells rang merrily as the people passed by, dressed in their best, with their prayer-books under their arms. They were going to hear the parson preach. They looked at Little Claus plowing with his five

horses, and he was so proud that he smacked his whip and said, " Gee-up, my five horses."

" You mustn't say that," said Great Claus, " for only one of them is yours."

But Little Claus soon forgot what he ought not to say, and when anyone passed, he would call out, " Gee-up, my five horses."

" I must really beg you not to say that again," said Great Claus, " for if you do, I shall hit your horse on the head, so that he will drop down dead on the spot, and there will be an end of him."

" I promise you I will not say it again," said the other; but as soon as anybody came by nodding to him, and wishing him " Good-day," he was so pleased, and thought how grand it was to have five horses plowing in his field, that he cried out again, " Gee-up, all my horses! "

" I'll gee-up your horses for you," said Great Claus, and seizing the tethering mallet he struck Little Claus' one horse on the head, and it fell down dead.

" Oh, now I have no horse at all," said Little Claus, weeping. But after a long while he flayed the dead horse, and hung up the skin in the wind to dry.

Then he put the dry skin into a bag, and hanging it over his shoulder went off to the next town to sell it. But he had a long way to go, and had to pass through a dark and gloomy forest.

Presently a storm arose, and he lost his way; and before he discovered the right path evening was drawing on, and it was still a long way to the town, and too far to return home before nightfall.

Near the road stood a large farmhouse. The shutters outside the windows were closed, but lights shone through the crevices and at the top. "They might let me stay here for the night," thought Little Claus, so he went up to the door and knocked. The farmer's wife opened the door, but when she heard what he wanted, she told him to go away; her husband was not at home, and she could not let any strangers in.

"Then I shall have to lie out here," said Little Claus to himself as the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close to the farmhouse stood a large haystack, and between it and the house there was a small shed with a thatched roof. "I can lie up there," said Little Claus, looking at the roof. "It will make a famous bed, but I hope the stork won't fly down and bite my legs." A live stork was standing up there who had his nest on the roof.

So Little Claus climbed on the roof of the shed, and as he turned about to make himself comfortable he discovered that the wooden shutters did not reach to the top of the windows, so that he could see into the room, in which a large table was laid out, with wine, roast meat, and a splendid fish.

The farmer's wife and the sexton were sitting at table together. Nobody else was there. She was filling his glass and helping him plentifully to fish.

"If only I could have some, too," thought Little Claus, and then, as he stretched out his neck towards the window, he spied a beautiful, large cake—indeed they had a glorious feast before them.

At that moment he heard someone riding down the road towards the farm. It was the farmer coming home.

He was a good man, but he had one very strange prejudice—he could not bear the sight of a sexton. If he happened to see one, he would get into a terrible rage. In consequence of this dislike, the sexton had gone to visit the farmer's wife during her husband's absence from home, and the good woman had put before him the best of everything she had in the house to eat.

When they heard the farmer, they were dreadfully frightened, and the woman made the sexton creep into a large chest which stood in a corner. He went at once, for he was well aware of the poor man's aversion to the sight of a sexton. The woman then quickly hid all the nice things and the wine in the oven, because if her husband had seen it he would have asked questions.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus, on the roof, when he saw the food disappearing.

"Is there anyone up there?" asked the farmer, peering up at Little Claus. "What are you doing up there? You had better come into the house."

Then Little Claus told him how he had lost his way, and asked if he might have shelter for the night.

"Certainly," said the farmer; "but the first thing is to have something to eat."

The woman received them both very kindly, laid the table, and gave them a large bowl of porridge. The farmer was hungry, and ate it with a good appetite; but Little Claus could not help thinking of the good roast meat, the fish and the cake, which he knew were hidden in the oven.

He put his sack with the hide in it under the table by his feet, for, as we remember, he was on his way to the town to sell it. He did not fancy the porridge, so he trod on the sack and made the dried hide squeak quite loudly.

"Hush!" said Little Claus to his sack, at the same time treading on it again, so that it squeaked louder than ever.

"What on earth have you got in your sack?" asked the farmer again.

"Oh, it's a Goblin," said Little Claus; "he says we needn't eat the porridge, for he has charmed the oven full of roast meat and fish and cake."

"What do you say!" said the farmer, opening the oven door with all speed, and seeing the nice

things the woman had hidden, but which her husband thought the Goblin had produced for their special benefit.

The woman dared not say anything, but put the food before them, and then they both made a hearty meal of the fish, the meat and the cake.

Then Little Claus trod on the skin and made it squeak again.

"What does he say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says," answered Little Claus, "that he has also charmed three bottles of wine into the oven for us."

So the woman had to bring out the wine too, and the farmer drank it and became merry. Wouldn't he like to have a Goblin, like the one in Little Claus' sack, for himself?

"Can he charm out the Devil?" asked the farmer. "I shouldn't mind seeing him, now that I am in such a merry mood."

"Oh, yes!" said Little Claus; "my Goblin can do everything that we ask him. Can't you?" he asked, trampling up the sack till it squeaked louder than ever. "Do you hear what I say? But the Devil is so ugly, you'd better not see him."

"Oh! I'm not a bit frightened. Whatever does he look like?"

"Well, he will show himself in the image of a sexton."

"Oh, dear!" said the farmer; "that's bad! I

must tell you that I can't bear to see a sexton! However, it doesn't matter! I shall know it's only the Devil, and then I sha'n't mind so much! Now, my courage is up! But he mustn't come too close."

"I'll ask my Goblin about it," said Little Claus, treading on the bag and putting his ear close to it.

"What does he say?"

"He says you can go along and open the chest in the corner, and there you'll see the Devil moping in the dark; but hold the lid tight so that he doesn't get out."

"Will you help me to hold it?" asked the farmer, going along to the chest where the woman had hidden the real sexton, who was shivering with fright.

The farmer lifted up the lid a wee little bit and peeped in. "Ha!" he shrieked, and sprang back. "Yes, I saw him, and he looked just exactly like our sexton! It was a horrible sight."

They had to have a drink after this, and there they sat drinking till far into the night.

"You must sell me that Goblin," said the farmer. "You may ask what you like for him! I will give you a bushel of money for him."

"No, I can't do that," said Little Claus; "you must remember how useful my Goblin is to me."

"Oh, but I should so like to have him," said the farmer, and he went on begging for him.

"Well," said Little Claus at last, "as you have been so kind to me I shall have to give him up. You shall have my Goblin for a bushel of money, but I must have it full to the brim!"

"You shall have it," said the farmer; "but you must take that chest away with you; I won't have it in the house for another hour."

So Little Claus gave his sack with the dried hide in it to the farmer, and received in return a bushel of money for it, and the measure was full to the brim. The farmer also gave him a large wheelbarrow to take the money and the chest away in.

"Good-by!" said Little Claus, and off he went with his money and the big chest with the sexton in it.

There was a wide and deep river on the other side of the wood, the stream was so strong that it was almost impossible to swim against it. A large new bridge had been built across it, and when they got into the very middle of it, Little Claus said quite loud, so that the sexton would hear him—

"What am I to do with this stupid old chest? it might be full of paving stones, it's so heavy! I am quite tired of wheeling it along; I'll just throw it into the river. If it floats down the river to my house, well and good, and if it doesn't, I sha'n't care."

Then he took hold of the chest and raised it up a bit, as if he was about to throw it into the river.

"No, no! let it be!" shouted the sexton. "Let me get out!"

"Hullo!" said Little Claus, pretending to be frightened. "Why, he's still inside it, then I must throw it into the river to drown him."

"Oh no, oh no!" shouted the sexton. "I'll give you a bushel full of money if you'll let me out!"

"Oh, that's another matter," said Little Claus, opening the chest. The sexton crept out at once and pushed the empty chest into the water, and then went home and gave Little Claus a whole bushel of money.

"I got a pretty fair price for that horse I must admit!" said he to himself when he got home to his own room and turned the money out of the wheelbarrow into a heap on the floor. "What a rage Great Claus will be in when he discovers how rich I am become through my one horse, but I won't tell him straight out about it." So he sent a boy to Great Claus to borrow a bushel measure.

"What does he want that for!" thought Great Claus, and he rubbed some tallow on the bottom, so that a little of whatever was to be measured might stick to it. So it did, for when the measure came back three new silver threepenny bits were sticking to it.

"What's this?" said Great Claus, and he ran straight along to Little Claus. "Where on earth did you get all that money?"

"Oh, that was for my horse's hide which I sold last night."

"That was well paid, indeed," said Great Claus, and he ran home, took an ax and hit all his four horses on the head. He then flayed them and went off to the town with the hides.

"Skins, skins, who will buy skins?" he shouted up and down the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners in the town came running up and asked him how much he wanted for them.

"A bushel of money for each," said Great Claus.

"Are you mad?" they all said; "do you imagine we have money by the bushel?"

"Skins, skins, who will buy skins?" he shouted again, and the shoemakers took up their measures and the tanners their leather aprons, and beat Great Claus through the town.

"Skins, skins!" they mocked him. "Yes, we'll give you a rawhide. Out of the town with him!" they shouted, and Great Claus had to hurry off as fast as ever he could go. He had never had such a beating in his life.

"Little Claus shall pay for this!" he said when he got home. "I'll kill him for it."

Little Claus' old grandmother had just died in his house; she certainly had been very cross and unkind to him, but now that she was dead, he felt quite sorry about it. He took the dead woman and

"OPEN THE SACK!" SHOUTED LITTLE CLAUS

put her into his warm bed, to see if he could bring her to life again. He meant her to stay there all night, and he would sit on a chair in the corner; he had slept like that before.

As he sat there in the night, the door opened, and in came Great Claus with his ax; he knew where Little Claus' bed stood, and he went straight up to it and hit the dead grandmother a blow on the forehead, thinking that it was Little Claus.

"Just see if you'll cheat me again after that!" he said, and then he went home again.

"What a bad, wicked man he is," said Little Claus; "he was going to kill me there. What a good thing that poor old granny was dead already, or else he would have killed her."

He now dressed his old grandmother in her best Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbor, harnessed it to a cart, and set his grandmother on the back seat, so that she could not fall out when the cart moved. Then he started off through the wood. When the sun rose he was just outside a big inn, and Little Claus drew up his horse and went in to get something to eat.

The landlord was a very, very rich man, and a very good man, but he was fiery-tempered, as if he were made of pepper and tobacco.

"Good-morning!" said he to Little Claus; "you've got your best clothes on very early this morning!"

"Yes," said Little Claus; "I'm going to town with my old grandmother, she's sitting out there in the cart, I can't get her to come in. Won't you take her out a glass of mead? You'll have to shout at her, she's very hard of hearing."

"Yes, she shall have it!" said the innkeeper, and he poured out a large glass of mead which he took out to the dead grandmother in the cart.

"Here is a glass of mead your son has sent!" said the innkeeper, but the dead woman sat quite still and never said a word.

"Don't you hear?" shouted the innkeeper as loud as ever he could; "here is a glass of mead!"

Again he shouted, and then again as loud as ever, but as she did not stir, he got angry and threw the glass of mead in her face, so that the mead ran all over her, and she fell backwards out of the cart, for she was only stuck up and not tied in.

"Now!" shouted Little Claus, as he rushed out of the inn and seized the landlord by the neck, "you have killed my grandmother! Just look, there's a great hole in her forehead!"

"Oh, what a misfortune!" exclaimed the innkeeper, clasping his hands; "that's the consequence of my fiery temper! Good Little Claus, I will give you a bushel of money, and bury your grandmother as if she had been my own, if you will only say nothing about it. If you tell, they will chop my head off, and that is so nasty."

So Little Claus had a whole bushel of money, and the innkeeper buried the old grandmother just as if she had been his own.

When Little Claus got home again with all his money, he immediately sent over his boy to Great Claus to borrow his measure.

"What!" said Great Claus, "is he not dead? I shall have to go and see about it myself!" So he took the measure over to Little Claus himself.

"I say, wherever did you get all that money?" asked he, his eyes round with amazement at what he saw.

"It was my grandmother you killed instead of me!" said Little Claus. "I have sold her and got a bushel of money for her!"

"That was good pay, indeed!" said Great Claus, and he hurried home, took an ax and killed his old grandmother.

He then put her in a cart and drove off to the town with her where the apothecary lived, and asked if he would buy a dead body.

"Who is it, and where did the body come from?" asked the apothecary.

"It is my grandmother, and I have killed her for a bushel of money!" said Great Claus.

"Heaven preserve us!" said the apothecary. "You are talking like a madman; pray don't say such things! You might lose your head!"

And he pointed out to him what a horribly

wicked thing he had done, and what a bad man he was. Great Claus was so frightened that he rushed straight out of the shop, jumped into the cart, whipped up his horse and galloped home. The apothecary and everyone else thought he was mad, and so they let him drive off.

"You shall be paid for this!" said Great Claus, when he got out on the highroad. "You shall pay for this, Little Claus!"

As soon as he got home he took the biggest sack he could find, went over to Little Claus and said:

"You have deceived me again! First I killed my horses, and then my old grandmother! It's all your fault, but you sha'n't have the chance of cheating me again!"

Then he took Little Claus by the waist and put him into the sack, put it on his back, and shouted to him:

"I'm going to drown you now!"

It was a long way to go before he came to the river, and Little Claus was not so light to carry. The road passed close by the church in which the organ was playing, and the people were singing beautifully. Great Claus put down the sack with Little Claus in it close by the church door, and thought he would like to go in and hear a psalm before he went any further. Little Claus could not get out of the bag, and all the people were in church, so he went in, too.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" sighed Little Claus in the sack. He turned and twisted, but it was impossible to undo the cord. Just then an old cattle drover with white hair and a tall stick in his hand came along. He had a whole drove of cows and bulls before him. They ran against the sack Little Claus was in, and upset it.

"Oh dear!" sighed Little Claus; "I am so young to be going to the Kingdom of Heaven!"

"And I," said the cattle drover, "am so old and cannot get there yet!"

"Open the sack!" shouted Little Claus. "Get in in place of me, and you will get to heaven directly!"

"That will just suit me," said the cattle drover, undoing the sack for Little Claus, who immediately sprang out. "You must look after the cattle now," said the old man as he crept into the sack. Little Claus tied it up and walked off, driving the cattle before him.

A little while after Great Claus came out of the church. He took up the sack on his back, and certainly thought it had grown lighter, for the old cattle drover was not more than half the weight of Little Claus. "How light he seems to have got; that must be because I have been to church and said my prayers!" Then he went on to the river, which was both wide and deep, and threw the sack with the old cattle drover in it into the water, shout-

"PUT A BIG STONE IN, OR I SHA'N'T SINK"

ing as he did so (for he thought it was Little Claus), "Now, you won't cheat me again!" Then he went homewards, but when he reached the crossroads he met Little Claus with his herd of cattle.

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed Great Claus. "Didn't I drown you?"

"Yes," said Little Claus, "it's only about half an hour since you threw me into the river!"

"But where did you get all those splendid beasts?" asked Great Claus.

"They are sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I will tell you the whole story, and indeed I thank you heartily for drowning me. I'm at the top of the tree now and a very rich man, I can tell you.

I was so frightened when I was in the sack! The wind whistled in my ears when you threw me over the bridge into the cold water. I immediately sank to the bottom, but I was not hurt, for the grass is beautifully soft down there. The sack was opened at once by a beautiful maiden in snow-white clothes with a green wreath on her wet hair. She took my hand and said, 'Are you there, Little Claus? Here are some cattle for you, and a mile further up the road you will come upon another herd, which I will give you, too!' Then I saw that the river was a great highway for the sea-folk. Down at the bottom of it they walked and drove about, from the sea right up to the end of the river. The flowers were lovely and the grass was so fresh; the fishes which swam about glided close to me just like birds in the air. How nice the people were, and what a lot of cattle strolling about in the ditches."

"But why did you come straight up here again then?" asked Great Claus. "I shouldn't have done that, if it was so fine down there."

"Oh," said Little Claus, "that's because I'm wise. You remember I told you that the mermaid said that a mile further up the road—and by the road she means the river, for she can't go anywhere else—I should find another herd of cattle waiting for me. Well, I know how many bends there are in the river, and what a roundabout way it would be. It's ever so much shorter if you can come up

on dry land and take the short cuts, you save a couple of miles by it, and get the cattle much sooner."

"Oh, you are a fortunate man!" said Great Claus. "Do you think I could get some sea-cattle if I were to go down to the bottom of the river?"

"I'm sure you would," said Little Claus; "but I can't carry you in the sack to the river; you're too heavy for me. If you like to walk there and then get into the sack, I'll throw you into the river with the greatest pleasure in the world."

"Thank you," said Great Claus; "but if I don't get any sea-cattle when I get down there, see if I don't give you a sound thrashing."

"Oh! don't be so hard on me." They then walked off to the river. As soon as the cattle saw the water, they rushed down to drink. "See what a hurry they're in," said Little Claus; "they want to get down to the bottom again."

"Now, help me," said Great Claus. He then crept into a big sack which had been lying across the back of one of the cows. "Put a big stone in, or I'm afraid I sha'n't sink," said Great Claus.

"Oh, that'll be all right," said Little Claus, but he put a big stone into the sack and gave it a push. Plump went the sack and Great Claus was in the river, where he sank to the bottom at once.

"I'm afraid he won't find any cattle," said Little Claus, as he drove his herd home.

Olé Lukóié, The Dustman

OLÉ LÜKOIÉ, THE DUSTMAN

THERE is nobody in all the world who can tell so many stories as Olé Luköié! And such stories he can tell!

When night is falling, and the children are sitting round the table or on their little footstools, as good as possible, in walks Olé Shut-eyes. He comes so quietly up the stairs without his shoes, and opens the door so softly that nobody hears him; and puff! he sends a shower of milk into their eyes in such fine spray that they never see it, but they can't keep their eyes open after it, and so they never see him. He steals behind them and breathes upon their necks, making their heads as heavy as lead. But he never hurts them; he does it all from love of the children. He only wants them to be quiet, and the best way to make them quiet is to have them in bed where he can tell them his stories.

Then as soon as the children are asleep, Olé Luköié sits down on their beds. His clothes are all of silk, but it is impossible to tell what color it is, for it shimmers green, red, and blue every time

he turns. He has an umbrella under his arm, and there are pictures on it. He holds it over the good children, and they dream the most delightful stories all night long. The other umbrella has no pictures on it, and he holds this one over the children who have been naughty, and then they sleep heavily till the morning and have no dreams at all.

I am now going to tell you about a little boy to whom Olé Lukŏié went every night for a whole week. His name was Hialmar. There are just seven stories, because there are seven days in a week.

MONDAY

"Now, just listen!" said Olé Lukŏié, one evening, when he had got Hialmar to bed. "First I will touch things up a bit." At once all the plants in pots became big trees, with their branches stretching right up to the ceiling and along the walls, so that the room looked like a delightful arbor. The branches were covered with flowers, and the flowers were more beautiful than roses; they had the most delightful scent, and, if you tried to eat them, were more delicious than the very nicest jam. The fruit shone like gold, and there were buns bursting with plums!

All at once the most miserable grumbles came from the table-drawer where Hialmar's schoolbooks were kept.

"What is that now?" said Olé Luköié, going along and opening the drawer.

It was the slate, groaning and writhing because there was a wrong figure in the sum set on it, and it was ready to fall to pieces.

The pencil was hopping and skipping at the end of its piece of string, just as if it had been a little dog which would like to try and do the sum, but it couldn't! Then there was Hialmar's copybook clamoring away inside its covers most pitifully. There was a row of capital letters down each side on every page, each with a little letter beside it, and beside these were letters which imagined that they looked like them, but they looked almost as if they had tumbled over the line on which they ought to have been standing upright. These had been written by Hialmar.

"See, this is how you ought to hold yourselves!" said the headlines, "so—to one side with a brisk flourish!"

"Oh, we should like nothing better," said Hialmar's letters, "but we can't, we are so crooked!"

"Then you shall have a dose of medicine," said Olé Luköié.

"Oh, no!" they cried, and quickly stood up as stiffly as possible.

"Well, now we can't tell any stories!" said Olé Luköié. "I must drill them! One, two! One, two!" So he drilled the letters and they stood up

stiffer than any headlines could stand. But when Olé Lukóié went away and Hialmar woke up in the morning they were as crooked as ever.

TUESDAY

As soon as Hialmar was in bed, Olé Lukóié touched all the furniture in the room with his little wooden wand, and everything began to talk. There was a big picture in a gilt frame hanging over the chest of drawers; it was a landscape with tall, old trees, flowers growing in the grass, and a pond of water, with a river flowing from it round behind a wood, past many castles and away to the open sea.

Olé Lukóié touched the picture with his wand, and the birds in it began to sing, the branches of the trees moved, and the clouds scudded along; you could see their shadows passing over the landscape.

Now Olé Lukóié lifted little Hialmar up close to the frame, and Hialmar put his leg right into the picture among the long grass, and there he stood; the sun shone down upon him through the branches of the trees. He ran to the water and got into a little boat which lay there; it was painted red and white, and the sails shone like silver. Six swans, all with golden crowns round their necks and a shining blue star upon their heads, drew the boat past the dark green woods, where the trees

THE ROOM LOOKED LIKE A DELIGHTFUL ARBOR

told stories about robbers and witches; and the flowers told other stories about pretty little elves, and all that the butterflies had told them.

Beautiful fish with gold and silver scales swam after the boat. Every now and then they sprang out of the water and back again with a splash. Red and blue birds, large and small, flew in two long lines behind them. Gnats buzzed, and June-bugs boomed. They all wanted to go with Hialmar, and each of them had a story to tell.

That was a sailing trip indeed! Now the woods were thick and dark, now they were like beautiful gardens full of sunshine and flowers, and among them were castles of glass and of marble. Princesses stood upon the balconies, and they were all little girls whom Hialmar knew and played with.

They stretched out their hands, each one holding a beautiful sugar pig. Hialmar took hold of one end of the pig as they sailed by, and the princess held the other tight, and each had a share, she the smaller and Hialmar the bigger! Little princes stood sentry by each castle; they saluted with golden swords, and showered down sugar plums and tin soldiers; they were princes indeed.

Sometimes he sailed through a wood, sometimes through great halls, or right through a town. He passed through the one where his nurse lived, who used to carry him about when he was quite a little boy and who was so fond of him. She nodded and

waved her hand to him, and sang a pretty little song which she had written herself and sent to Hialmar:

"I dream of thee for many an hour,
Hialmar, my own, my sweeting;
My kisses once fell like a shower,
Thy brow and red cheeks greeting.

"Mine ear thy first formed word addressed,
Thy last must be in parting;
May you on earth by Heaven be blessed,
Angel, from Heavenward darting!"

All the birds sang, too, the flowers danced upon their stalks, and the old trees nodded, just as if Olé Luköié were telling them stories.

WEDNESDAY

How the rain was pouring down outside! Hialmar could even hear it in his sleep, and when Olé Luköié opened the window, the water stood right up to the sill; it was a regular lake, and a beautiful ship lay close up to the house.

"Will you sail with me, little Hialmar?" said Olé Luköié. "You can go to distant countries to-night, and be back here again in the morning!"

Then all at once Hialmar found himself in his best Sunday clothes on board the beautiful ship; it was heavenly weather, and they sailed through

the streets, past the church, till they reached a wild open sea. They sailed so far that there was no more land to be seen.

A flock of storks was leaving home. They were on their way to the warm countries, flying in a line, one behind the other. They had already flown a long, long way, and one of them was so tired that his wings could hardly carry him any further. He was the last one in the row, and soon he was a long way behind. At last he sank, with outspread wings, lower and lower; he flapped his wings feebly for a few strokes, but it was no use. Now he touched the rigging of the ship with his feet, and slid down the sail with a flop on to the deck.

Then the cabin boy picked him up and put him into the henhouse, with the chickens, and ducks and turkeys, and the poor stork stood among them looking quite depressed.

"What a creature!" said all the hens. The turkey-cock puffed himself up as big as he could, and asked who he was; and the ducks waddled backwards, pushing against each other, saying, "Quack, quack!"

Then the stork told them about sunny Africa, and the pyramids, and the ostrich running across the deserts like a wild horse, but the ducks did not understand him, and they pushed each other and said, "Are we agreed that he is an idiot?"

"Yes, indeed, he's an idiot," said the turkey-

cock with a gobble. Then the stork became quite silent, and thought about his beloved Africa.

"Nice thin legs you've got!" said the turkey-cock; "how much a yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack!" grinned all the ducks, but the stork appeared not to hear them.

"You're quite at liberty to laugh, too," said the turkey-cock to him; "it was a very witty remark, or perhaps it was too low for you? Gobble, gobble!" Then all the hens clucked and the ducks quacked; they got great amusement out of it.

But Hialmar went along to the henhouse, opened the door, and called the stork, and it hopped out on to the deck to him. It was rested now, and it nodded to Hialmar to thank him and spread its wings and flew away to the warm countries. But the hens clucked, the ducks quacked, and the turkey-cock's head got as red as fire.

"To-morrow we'll make you into soup," said Hialmar, and then he woke up and found himself lying in his own little bed. That was an extraordinary journey Olé Lukõié had taken him.

THURSDAY

"I'll tell you what!" said Olé Lukõié; "don't be frightened, and I will show you a little mouse." And he stretched out his hand with the tiny little animal in it. "It has come to invite you to a wedding. Two little mice are going to be married

to-night. They live under the floor of your mother's pantry, which they say is a most delightful home."

"But how can I get through a little mouse-hole in the floor?" said Hialmar.

"Leave that to me," said Olé Luköié; "I'll soon make you small enough!"

He touched Hialmar with his wand, and Hialmar quickly grew smaller and smaller; at last he was not as tall as a finger.

"Now you may borrow the tin soldier's clothes. I think they'll just fit you, and it looks so smart to have on a uniform when one's in company."

"Yes, indeed!" said Hialmar, and in a moment he was dressed like the grandest tin soldier.

"Be so good as to take a seat in your mother's thimble," said the little mouse, "and I shall have the honor of drawing you!"

"Heavens! are you going to take that trouble yourself, young lady?" said Hialmar, and off they drove to the mouse's wedding.

First they went down under the floor into a long passage, which was just high enough for them to drive through, and the whole passage was lighted up with touch-wood.

"Isn't there a delicious smell here?" said the mouse who was pulling him; "the whole passage has been smeared over with bacon fat! Nothing could be nicer."

Then they came to the bridal hall, where all the little lady mice stood on the right whispering and giggling, as if they were making fun of each other, and on the left stood all the gentlemen mice stroking their whiskers with their paws. The bridal pair stood in the middle of the room, in the hollow rind of a cheese, kissing each other most energetically before all the other people, but that was all right because they were engaged, and just about to be married.

More and more visitors poured in, the mice were almost crushing each other to death, and the bridal pair had taken their place in the doorway, so that no one could get in or out. The whole room, like the passage, was smeared with bacon fat. There were no other refreshments, but for dessert a pea was produced, in which one of the little mice of the family had bitten the name of the bridal pair; that is to say the first letter of it, and everyone thought this quite extraordinary.

All the mice said it was a delightful wedding, and the conversation most entertaining.

And then Hialmar drove home again; he had been in very grand company, but in order to get there he had been obliged to make himself small enough to get into the uniform of a tin soldier.

FRIDAY

"It is astounding what a number of grown-up

SIX SWANS DREW THE BOAT PAST THE DARK WOODS

people would like to get hold of me!" said Olé Louköié, "especially those with a bad conscience. 'Good little Olé,' they say to me, 'we can't close our eyes, and here we lie all night with all our bad deeds staring us in the face. They are like naughty elfins; they come and sit on our beds and squirt hot water over us. Won't you come and chase them away so that we may have a good sleep? We will gladly pay you, Olé. You will find the money on the window-sill.' But I don't do it for money!" said Olé Luköié.

"What are we going to do to-night?" asked Hialmar.

"Well, I don't know! Would you like to go to a wedding again to-night? It's a different kind from yesterday's. Your sister's big doll, the one which looks like a man, and is called Herman, is to be married to Bertha. It is her birthday, so there will be no end of presents."

"Oh, I know all about that! Whenever the dolls want new clothes my sister lets them have a birthday or a wedding. It has happened hundreds of times!"

"Yes, but to-night it's the hundred and first wedding, and the hundred and first is the end of all things, so that's why this one will be so grand. Just look!"

Hialmar looked along at the table. There was the little pasteboard house with lights in the win-

dows, and all the tin soldiers presenting arms outside. The bridal pair sat upon the floor leaning against the leg of the table. They were very thoughtful, and they had reason to be.

Olé Luköié, dressed in grandmother's black skirt, married them. When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room joined in singing the following pretty song which had been written by the pencil; it went to the tune of the tattoo.

"Our song shall swing like the wind, like the wind,
Till the bridal pair are enshrin'd, are enshrin'd,
And they curtsey both like a stick, do you mind?
For they're wood inside with kid for a rind.
Hurrah! hurrah! wood and skin well combin'd,
We'll sing it aloud to the rain and the wind!"

Then the presents were given, but they had declined any food; love was enough for them.

"Shall we go into the country or travel abroad?" asked the bridegroom, and then they consulted the swallow who had traveled so much, and the old mother hen who had reared five broods of chickens. The swallow told them all about the delightful warm countries where the grapes hung in luscious clusters, and where the air was so mild, and the colors on the mountains were more wonderful than anywhere else.

"But they haven't got our green cabbage," said the hen. "I was in the country all one summer

with my chicks; there was a gravel pit that we scratched in all day, and we got admission to a garden where the cabbage grew! Oh, how green it was! I can't imagine anything more beautiful."

"But one cabbage is just like another," said the swallow, "and then there's so much bad weather there!"

"Oh, we're used to that," said the hen.

"But it's so cold, it freezes."

"That's good for the cabbage," said the hen. "Besides, sometimes it is warm enough. Four years ago didn't we have a summer with tremendous heat? For five weeks one could hardly breathe! And then we don't have all the poisonous creatures they have abroad, and there are no robbers. Anyone who doesn't think our own country the best, must be a fool! He doesn't deserve to live here." And the hen began to cry. "I've had my journeys, too. I once traveled twelve miles in a barrel, and there's no pleasure in traveling."

"Ah, the hen is a wise woman!" said Bertha the doll. "I don't like traveling among mountains either, for first you go up and then you go down! No, we will move out by the gravel pit and take our walks in the cabbage garden."

And that was the end of it.

SATURDAY

"Are we going to have some stories?" asked

little Hialmar, as soon as Olé Luköié had him in bed.

"We haven't time for any to-night," said Olé, opening his prettiest umbrella. "Just look at these Chinese!"

The whole umbrella looked exactly like a big Chinese bowl, with blue trees all over it, and arched bridges on which stood little people nodding their heads. "We must have the whole world polished up for to-morrow," said Olé. "It is a holiday, for it is Sunday. I must go up into the church tower to see if the little church brownies are polishing the bells so that they may sound well. I must go into the fields to see if the wind has blown the dust off the grass and leaves. My biggest piece of work is to get down all the stars to polish them; I take them in my apron, and first I have to number each one, and the holes they belong to have to be numbered too, so that they may go back into their proper places, or they wouldn't stick, and then we should be having too many falling stars. One after the other would drop out."

"Now, I say, Mr. Luköié," said one of the old portraits hanging on the wall, "I am Hialmar's great-grandfather. I am much obliged to you for telling him stories, but you mustn't puzzle his brains. The stars can't be taken down to be polished! The stars are planets just like our own earth, and that's the best of them!"

"Much obliged to you, old great-grandfather," said Olé Luköié. "My best thanks to you. You are the head of the family. You are an antiquity, but I am older than you! I am an old heathen; the Greeks and Romans call me the Dream-god! I have my footing in the grandest houses; I can get on both with big and little! You may tell the stories yourself!" And then Olé Luköié went away and took his umbrella with him.

"I suppose one mayn't give an opinion now!" said the old portrait.

And then Hialmar woke.

SUNDAY

"Good-evening," said Olé Luköié, and Hialmar nodded and quickly jumped up and turned great-grandfather's portrait with its face to the wall, so that it should not talk as it did last time.

"Now you must tell me some stories about 'The five green peas which lived in a peaspod,' and about the 'Cock paying his addresses to the hen,' and about the 'Darning-needle' which was so fine that it fancied it was an ordinary needle!"

"You may have too much of a good thing," said Olé Luköié; "I would rather show you something you know! I will show you my brother, who is also called Olé Luköié, but he never comes more than once to anybody, and when he comes he takes them away with him on his horse, and tells them

stories. He only knows two, but one is so beautiful that nobody on earth can imagine it, and one is too horrible to be described!"

So Olé lifted little Hialmar up to the window, and said, "Now you can see my brother, the other Olé Luköié! He is also called Death. You see he doesn't look at all bad, as he sometimes does in pictures, all bones and joints! No, indeed, he has a silver embroidered border round his coat which is a Hussar's uniform, and a black velvet cloak streams out behind over his horse's back! See how they are galloping!"

And Hialmar saw how Olé Luköié rode off, taking both old and young with him on his horse. He put some of them before him and some behind, but he always asked first, "What character have you in your mark book?"

They all said "good."

"Let me see myself," said he, and then they had to show him the book. All those who had "very good" or "excellent" against their names were put up in front of him, and were told the most delightful stories; but those who had only "pretty good" or "tolerable," had to sit behind him, and were told horrible stories. They shivered, and cried, and tried to get off the horse, but they couldn't do that, because they grew fast to it at once.

"But Death is a beautiful Olé Luköié," said Hialmar. "I am not a bit afraid of him!"

"Nor need you be," said Olé Luköié, "if only you take care to have a good character in your book."

"Ah, now, that's instructive!" mumbled great-grandfather's portrait. "It's some good after all to speak one's mind!" and he was quite pleased.

Now this is the story about Olé Luköié! To-night he can tell you some more himself.

The Ugly Duckling

THE UGLY DUCKLING

IN a sunny spot in the country stood an old mansion surrounded by a deep moat. Great dock leaves grew from the walls of the house right down to the water's edge; some of them were so tall that a small child could stand upright under them. In amongst the leaves it was as secluded as in the depths of a forest; and there a duck was sitting on her nest. Her little ducklings were just about to be hatched, but she was nearly tired of sitting; it had lasted such a long time. Moreover, she had very few visitors, as the other ducks liked swimming about in the moat better than waddling up to sit under the dock leaves and gossip with her.

At last one egg after another began to crack. "Cheep, cheep!" they said. All the chicks had come to life, and were poking out their heads.

"Quack! quack!" said the duck; they all quacked their hardest, and looked about them on all sides among the green leaves; their mother allowed them to look as much as they liked, for green is good for the eyes.

"How big the world is, to be sure!" said all the young ones; for they certainly had ever so much more room to move about than when they were inside in the egg shell.

"Do you imagine this is the whole world?" said the mother. "It stretches a long way on the other side of the garden, right into the parson's field; but I have never been as far as that! I suppose you are all here now?" and she got up. "No! I declare I have not got you all yet! The biggest egg is still there; how long is it going to last?" and she settled herself on the nest again.

"Well, how are you getting on?" said an old duck who had come to pay her a visit.

"This one egg is taking such a long time," answered the sitting duck, "the shell will not crack; but now you must look at the others; they are the finest ducklings I have ever seen! they are all exactly like their father, the rascal! he never comes to see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't crack," said the old duck. "You may be sure that it is a turkey's egg! I have been cheated like that once, and I had no end of trouble and worry with the creatures, for I may tell you that they are afraid of the water. I could not get them into it; I quacked and snapped at them, but it was no good. Let me see the egg! Yes, it is a turkey's egg! You just

let it alone and teach the other children to swim."

"I will sit on it a little longer; I have sat so long already, that I may as well go on till the Midsummer Fair comes round."

"Please yourself," said the old duck, and she went away.

At last the big egg cracked. "Cheep, cheep!" said the young one and tumbled out; how big and ugly he was! The duck looked at him.

"That is a monstrous big duckling," she said; "none of the others looked like that; can he be a turkey chick? Well, we shall soon find that out; into the water he shall go, if I have to kick him in myself."

Next day was gloriously fine, and the sun shone on all the green dock leaves. The mother duck with her whole family went down to the moat.

Splash, into the water she sprang. "Quack, quack!" she said, and one duckling plumped in after the other. The water dashed over their heads, but they came up again and floated beautifully; their legs went of themselves, and they were all there; even the big ugly gray one swam about with them.

"No, that is no turkey," she said. "How beautifully he uses his legs and how erect he holds himself: he is my own chick! after all, he is not so bad when you come to look at him properly. Quack,

quack! Now come with me and I will take you into the world, and introduce you to the duckyard; but keep close to me all the time, so that no one may tread upon you, and beware of the cat!"

They went into the duckyard. There was a fearful uproar going on, for two broods were fighting for the head of an eel, and in the end the cat captured it.

"That's how things go in this world," said the mother duck, and she licked her bill, for she wanted the eel's head herself.

"Use your legs," said she; "mind you quack properly, and bend your necks to the old duck over there! She is the grandest of them all; she has Spanish blood in her veins and that accounts for her size, and, do you see? she has a red rag round her leg; that is a wonderfully fine thing, and the most extraordinary mark of distinction any duck can have. It shows clearly that she is not to be parted with, and that she is worthy of recognition both by beasts and men! Quack now! don't turn your toes in; a well brought up duckling keeps his legs wide apart just like father and mother; that's it, now bend your necks, and say quack!"

They did as they were bid, but the other ducks round about looked at them and said, quite loud: "Just look there! now we are to have that tribe! just as if there were not enough of us already, and, oh, dear! how ugly that duckling is; we won't

stand him!" and a duck flew at him at once and bit him in the neck.

"Let him be," said the mother; "he is doing no harm."

"Very likely not, but he is so ungainly and queer," said the biter; "he must be whacked."

"They are handsome children mother has," said the old duck with the rag round her leg; "all good looking except this one. He is not a good specimen; it's a pity you can't make him over again."

"That can't be done, your grace," said the mother duck; "he is not handsome, but he is a thorough good creature, and he swims as beautifully as any of the others; nay, I think I might venture even to add that I think he will improve as he goes on, or perhaps in time he may grow smaller! He was too long in the egg, and so he has not come out with a very good figure." She patted his neck and stroked him down. "Besides he is a drake," said she; "so it does not matter so much. I believe he will be very strong, and I don't doubt but he will make his way in the world."

"The other ducklings are very pretty," said the old duck. "Now make yourselves quite at home, and if you find the head of an eel you may bring it to me!"

After that they felt quite at home. But the poor duckling which had been the last to come out of the shell, and who was so ugly, was bitten, pushed

HE REACHED A POOR LITTLE COTTAGE

about, and made fun of both by the ducks and the hens. "He is too big," they all said; and the turkey-cock, who was born with his spurs on, and therefore thought himself quite an emperor, puffed himself up like a vessel in full sail, made for him, and gobbled and gobbled till he became quite red in the face. The poor duckling was at his wit's end, and did not know which way to turn; he was

in despair because he was so ugly, and the butt of the whole duckyard.

So the first day passed, and afterwards matters grew worse and worse. The poor duckling was chased and hustled by all of them; even his brothers and sisters abused him; and they were always saying, "If only the cat would get hold of you, you hideous object!" Even his mother said, "I wish to goodness you were miles away." The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the girl who fed them kicked him aside.

At last he ran off and flew right over the hedge, where the little birds flew up into the air in a fright.

"That is because I am so ugly," thought the poor duckling, shutting his eyes, but he ran on all the same until he came to a great marsh where the wild ducks lived; he was so tired and miserable that he stayed there the whole night.

In the morning the wild ducks flew up to inspect their new comrade.

"What sort of a creature are you?" they inquired, as the duckling turned from side to side and greeted them as well as he could. "You are frightfully ugly," said the wild ducks, "but that does not matter to us, so long as you do not marry into our family!" Poor fellow! he had not thought of marriage; all he wanted was permission to lie among the rushes, and to drink a little of the marsh water.

He stayed there two whole days, then two wild geese came, or rather two wild ganders; they were not long out of the shell, and therefore rather pert.

"I say, comrade," they said, "you are so ugly that we have taken quite a fancy to you; will you join us and be a bird of passage? There is another marsh close by, and there are some charming wild geese there; all sweet young ladies, who can say quack! You are ugly enough to make your fortune among them." Just at that moment, bang! bang! was heard up above, and both the wild geese fell dead among the reeds, and the water turned blood red. Bang! bang! went the guns, and whole flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes and the shot peppered among them again.

There was a grand shooting party, and the sportsmen lay hidden round the marsh; some even sat on the branches of the trees which overhung the water; the blue smoke rose like clouds among the dark trees and swept over the pool.

The water-dogs wandered about in the swamp, splash! splash! The rushes and reeds bent beneath their tread on all sides. It was terribly alarming to the poor duckling. He twisted his head round to get it under his wing, and just at that moment a frightful, big dog appeared close beside him; his tongue hung right out of his mouth and his eyes glared wickedly. He opened his great chasm of a mouth close to the duckling, showed his sharp

teeth—and—splash—went on without touching him.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" sighed the duckling, "I am so ugly that even the dog won't bite me!"

Then he lay quite still while the shot whistled among the bushes, and bang after bang rent the air. It only became quiet late in the day, but even then the poor duckling did not dare to get up; he waited several hours more before he looked about, and then he hurried away from the marsh as fast as he could. He ran across fields and meadows, and there was such a wind that he had hard work to make his way.

Towards night he reached a poor little cottage; it was such a miserable hovel that it could not make up its mind which way to fall even, and so it remained standing. The wind whistled so fiercely round the duckling that he had to sit on his tail to resist it, and it blew harder and harder; then he saw that the door had fallen off one hinge and hung so crookedly that he could creep into the house through the crack, and by this means he made his way into the room. An old woman lived there with her cat and her hen. The cat, which she called "Sonnie," could arch his back, purr, and give off electric sparks, that is to say if you stroked his fur the wrong way. The hen had quite tiny short legs, and so she was called "Chuckie-low-

legs." She laid good eggs, and the old woman was as fond of her as if she had been her own child.

In the morning the strange duckling was immediately discovered and the cat began to purr, and the hen to cluck.

"What on earth is that!" said the old woman, looking round, but her sight was not good, and she thought the duckling was a fat duck which had escaped. "This is a capital find," said she; "now I shall have duck's eggs if only it is not a drake! we must find out about that!"

So she took the duckling on trial for three weeks, but no eggs made their appearance. The cat was the master of the house and the hen the mistress, and they always spoke of "we and the world," for they thought that they represented the half of the world, and that quite the better half.

The duckling thought there might be two opinions on the subject, but the hen would not hear of it.

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked.

"No!"

"Will you have the goodness to hold your tongue then!"

And the cat said, "Can you arch your back, purr, or give off sparks?"

"No."

"Then you had better keep your opinions to yourself when people of sense are speaking!"

The duckling sat in the corner nursing his ill-humor; then he began to think of the fresh air and the sunshine, an uncontrollable longing seized him to float on the water, and at last he could not help telling the hen about it.

"What on earth possesses you?" she asked; "you have nothing to do, that is why you get these freaks into your head. Lay some eggs or take to purring, and you will get over it."

"But it is so delicious to float on the water," said the duckling; "so delicious to feel it rushing over your head when you dive to the bottom."

"That would be a fine amusement," said the hen. "I think you have gone mad. Ask the cat about it; he is the wisest creature I know; ask him if he is fond of floating on the water or diving under it. I say nothing about myself. Ask our mistress, the old woman; there is no one in the world cleverer than she is. Do you suppose she has any desire to float on the water, or to duck underneath it?"

"You do not understand me," said the duckling.

"Well, if we don't understand you, who should? I suppose you don't consider yourself cleverer than the cat or the old woman, not to mention me. Don't make a fool of yourself, child, and thank your stars for all the good we have done you! Have you not lived in this warm room, and in such society that you might have learned something? But you are an idiot, and there is no pleasure in

associating with you. You may believe me I mean you well, I tell you home truths, and there is no surer way than that of knowing who are one's friends. You just see about laying some eggs, or learn to purr, or to emit sparks."

"I think I will go out into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Oh, do so by all means," said the hen.

So away went the duckling; he floated on the water and ducked underneath it, but he was looked askance at by every living creature for his ugliness. Now the autumn came on; the leaves in the woods turned yellow and brown; the wind took hold of them, and they danced about. The sky looked very cold, and the clouds hung heavy with snow and hail. A raven stood on the fence and croaked caw! caw! from sheer cold; it made one shiver only to think of it; the poor duckling certainly was in a bad case.

One evening, the sun was just setting in wintry splendor, when a flock of beautiful large birds appeared out of the bushes; the duckling had never seen anything so beautiful. They were dazzlingly white with long waving necks; they were swans, and uttering a peculiar cry, they spread out their magnificent broad wings and flew away from the cold regions to warmer lands and open seas. They mounted so high, so very high! The ugly little duckling became strangely uneasy; he circled

THE SMALLEST CHILD CRIED, "THERE IS A NEW ONE!"

round and round in the water like a wheel, craning his neck up into the air after them. Then he uttered a shriek so piercing and so strange, that he quite frightened himself. Oh, he could not forget those beautiful birds, those happy birds, and as soon as they were out of sight he ducked right down to the bottom, and when he came up again he was quite beside himself. He did not know what the birds were, or whither they flew, but all the same he was more drawn towards them than he had ever been by any creatures before. He did not envy them in the least; how could it occur to him even to wish to be such a marvel of beauty? He would have been thankful if only the ducks would have tolerated him among them—the poor ugly creature!

The winter was so bitterly cold that the duckling was obliged to swim about in the water to keep it from freezing, but every night the hole in which he swam got smaller and smaller. Then it froze so hard that the surface ice cracked, and the duckling had to use his legs all the time, so that the ice should not close in round him; at last he was so weary that he could move no more, and he was frozen fast into the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant came along and saw him; he went out onto the ice and hammered a hole in it with his heavy wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife. There it soon re-

vived. The children wanted to play with it, but the duckling thought they were going to abuse him, and rushed in his fright into the milk pan, and the milk spurted out all over the room. The woman shrieked and threw up her hands. The duckling flew into the butter cask, and down into the meal tub and out again. Just imagine what it looked like by this time! The woman screamed and tried to hit it with the tongs, and the children tumbled over one another in trying to catch it, and they screamed with laughter—by good luck the door stood open, and the duckling flew out among the bushes and the new fallen snow—and it lay there thoroughly exhausted.

But it would be too sad to mention all the privation and misery it had to go through during that hard winter. When the sun began to shine warmly again, the duckling was in the marsh, lying among the rushes; the larks were singing and the beautiful spring had come.

When all at once it raised its wings, they flapped with much greater strength than before, and bore him off vigorously. Before he knew where he was, he found himself in a large garden where the apple trees were in full blossom, and the air was scented with lilacs; the long branches overhung the indented shores of the lake! Oh! the spring freshness was so delicious!

Just in front of him he saw three beautiful white

swans advancing towards him from a thicket; with rustling feathers they swam lightly over the water. The duckling recognized the majestic birds, and he was overcome by a strange melancholy.

"I will fly to them, the royal birds, and they will hack me to pieces, because I, who am so ugly, venture to approach them! But it won't matter; better be killed by them than be snapped at by the ducks, pecked by the hens, or spurned by the hen-wife, or suffer so much misery in the winter."

So he flew into the water and swam towards the stately swans; they saw him and darted towards him with ruffled feathers.

"Kill me, oh, kill me!" said the poor creature, and bowing his head towards the water he awaited his death. But what did he see reflected in the transparent water?

He saw below him his own image, but he was no longer a clumsy dark gray bird, ugly and ungainly; he was himself a swan! It does not matter in the least having been born in a duckyard, if only you come out of a swan's egg!

He felt quite glad of all the misery and tribulation he had gone through; he was the better able to appreciate his good fortune now, and all the beauty which greeted him. The big swans swam round and round him, and stroked him with their bills.

Some little children came into the garden with

corn and pieces of bread, which they threw into the water; and the smallest one cried out, "There is a new one!" The other children shouted with joy, "Yes, a new one has come!" And they clapped their hands and danced about, running after their father and mother. They threw the bread into the water, and one and all said: "The new one is the prettiest! He is so young and handsome." And the old swans bent their heads and did homage before him.

He felt quite shy, and hid his head under his wing; he did not know what to think; he was so happy, but not at all proud; a good heart never becomes proud. He thought of how he had been pursued and scorned, and now he heard them all say that he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. The lilacs bent their boughs right down into the water before him, and the bright sun was warm and cheering, and he rustled his feathers and raised his slender neck aloft, saying with exultation in his heart: "I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was the Ugly Duckling!"

The Girl Who Trod On a Loaf

THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF

I DARESAY you have heard of the girl who stepped on a loaf, so as not to soil her shoes, and all the misfortunes that befell her in consequence. At any rate the story has been written and printed too.

She was a poor child, of a proud and arrogant nature, and her disposition was bad from the beginning. When she was quite tiny, her greatest delight was to catch flies and pull their wings off, to make creeping insects of them. Then she would catch chafers and beetles and stick them on a pin, after which she would push a leaf or a bit of paper close enough for them to seize with their feet; for the pleasure of seeing them writhe and wriggle in their efforts to free themselves from the pins.

"The chafer is reading now," said little Inger; "look at it turning over the page!"

She got worse rather than better as she grew older; but she was very pretty and that no doubt was her misfortune, or she might have had many a beating which she never got.

" It will take a heavy blow to bend that head," said her own mother. " As a child you have often trampled on my apron, I fear when you are grown up you will trample on my heart! "

And so she did!

She was sent into service in the country with some rich people. They treated her as if she had been their own child, and dressed her in the same style. She grew prettier and prettier, but her pride grew, too.

When she had been with them a year, her employers said to her, " You ought to go home to see your parents, little Inger! "

So she went, but she went to show herself only, so that they might see how grand she was. When she got to the town gates, and saw the young men and maids gossiping round the pond, and her mother sitting among them with a bundle of sticks she had picked up in the woods, Inger turned away. She was ashamed that one so fine as herself should have such a ragged old woman, who picked up sticks, for her mother. She was not a bit sorry that she had turned back, only angry.

Another half year passed.

" Little Inger, you really ought to go and see your old parents," said her mistress. " Here is a large loaf of wheaten bread you may take to them. They will be pleased to see you."

Inger put on all her best clothes, and her fine

new shoes; she held up her skirts and picked her steps carefully so as to keep her shoes nice and clean. Now no one could blame her for this; but when she came to the path through the marsh a great part of it was wet and muddy, and she threw the loaf into the mud for a stepping-stone, to get over with dry shoes. As she stood there with one foot on the loaf and was lifting up the other for the next step, the loaf sank deeper and deeper with her till she entirely disappeared. Nothing was to be seen but a black bubbling pool.

But what had become of her? She went down to the Marsh-wife who has a brewery down there. The Marsh-wife is own sister to the Elf-king, and aunt to the Elf-maidens who are well enough known. They have had verses written about them and pictures painted; but all that people know about the Marsh-wife is, that when the mist rises over the meadows in the summer, she is at her brewing. It was into this brewery that little Inger fell, and no one can stand being there long. A scavenger's cart is sweet compared to the Marsh-wife's brewery. The smell from the barrels is enough to turn people faint, and the barrels are so close together that no one can pass between them, but wherever there is a little chink it is filled up with noisome toads and slimy snakes. Little Inger fell among all this horrid living filth; it was so icy cold that she shuddered from head to foot, and

her limbs grew quite stiff. The loaf stuck fast to her feet and it drew her down just as an amber button draws a bit of straw.

The Marsh-wife was at home. Old Bogey and his great-grandmother were paying her a visit. The great-grandmother is a very venomous old woman, and she is never idle. She never goes out without her work, and she had it with her to-day, too. She was busily making gad-about leather to put into people's shoes, so that the wearer might have no rest. She embroidered lies, and strung together all the idle words which fell to the ground, to make mischief of them. O yes, old great-grandmother can knit and embroider in fine style.

As soon as she saw little Inger, she put up her eyeglass and looked at her through it. "That girl has got something in her," she said; "I should like to have her as a remembrance of my visit. She would make a very good statue in my great-grandson's outer corridor."

So Inger was given to her and this was how she got to Bogey-land. People don't always get there by such a direct route, though it is easy enough to get there in more roundabout ways.

What a never-ending corridor that was to be sure; it made one giddy to look either backwards or forwards. Here stood an ignominious crew waiting for the door of mercy to be opened, but

ALL THEIR EVIL PASSIONS SHONE OUT OF THEIR EYES

long might they wait. Great fat, sprawling spiders spun webs of a thousand years round and round their feet; and these webs were like footscrews and held them as in a vise, or as though bound with a copper chain. Besides, there was such everlasting unrest in every soul; the unrest of torment. The miser had forgotten the key of his money chest, he knew he had left it sticking in the lock. But it would take far too long to enumerate all the various tortures here. Inger experienced the torture of standing like a statue with a loaf tied to her feet.

"This is what comes of trying to keep one's feet clean!" said she to herself. "Look how they stare at me." They did indeed stare at her, all their evil passions shone out of their eyes and spoke without words from their lips. They were a terrible sight. "It must be a pleasure to look at me!" thought Inger, "for I have a pretty face and nice clothes," but when she turned her eyes to look at them, her neck was too stiff. But oh, how dirty she had got in the Marsh-wife's brewery; she had never thought of that. Her clothes were covered with slime, a snake had got into her hair, and hung dangling down her back. A toad looked out of every fold in her dress, croaking like an asthmatic pug-dog. It was most unpleasant. "But all the others down here look frightful, too," was her consolation.

Worse than anything was the terrible hunger she

felt, and she could not stoop down to break a bit of bread off the loaf she was standing on. No; her back had stiffened, her arms and hands had stiffened, and her whole body was like a pillar of stone. She could only turn her eyes, but she could turn them right round, so as to look backwards; and a horrid sight it was. And then came the flies, they crept upon her eyes, and however much she winked they would not fly away; they could not, for she had pulled off their wings and made creeping insects of them. That was indeed a torment added to her gnawing hunger; she seemed at last to be absolutely empty.

"If this is to go on long I sha'n't be able to bear it," said she; but it did go on, and bear it she must.

Then a scalding tear fell upon her forehead, it trickled over her face and bosom right down to the loaf; then another fell, and another, till there was a perfect shower.

Who was crying for little Inger! Had she not a mother on earth? Tears of sorrow shed by a mother for her child will always reach it; but they do not bring healing, they burn and make the torment fifty times worse. Then this terrible hunger again, and she not able to get at the bread under her feet. She felt at last as if she had been feeding upon herself, and had become a mere hollow reed which conducts every sound. She distinctly heard everything that was said on earth

about herself, and she heard nothing but hard words.

Certainly her mother wept bitterly and sorrowfully, but at the same time she said, "Pride goes before a fall! There was your misfortune, Inger! How you have grieved your mother."

Her mother and everyone on earth knew all about her sin, how she had stepped upon the loaf, and sunk down under the earth, and so was lost. The cowherd had told them so much; he had seen it himself from the hillock where he was standing.

"How you have grieved your mother, Inger," said the poor woman. "But then I always said you would!"

"Oh, that I had never been born!" thought Inger then. "I should have been much better off. My mother's tears are no good now."

She heard the good people, her employers, who had been like parents to her, talking about her. "She was a sinful child," they said. "She did not value the gifts of God, but trod them under foot. She will find it hard to open the door of mercy."

"They ought to have brought me up better!" thought Inger; "they should have knocked the nonsense out of me."

She heard that a song had been written about her and sung all over the country, "The arrogant girl who trod on a loaf to keep her shoes clean."

"That I should hear that old story so often, and have to suffer so much for it!" thought Inger.

"The others ought to be punished for their sins, too," said Inger; "there would be plenty to punish. Oh, how I am being tormented!"

And her heart grew harder than her outer shell.

"Nobody will ever get any better in this company! and I won't be any better. Look, how they are all staring at me!"

Her heart was full of anger and malice towards everybody.

"Now they have got something to talk about up there! Oh, this torture!"

She heard people telling her story to children, and the little ones always called her "wicked Inger,"—"she was so naughty that she had to be tormented." She heard nothing but hard words from the children's mouths.

But one day, when anger and hunger were gnawing at her hollow shell, she heard her name mentioned, and her story being told to an innocent child, a little girl, and the little creature burst into tears at the story of proud, vain Inger.

"But will she never come up here again?" asked the child, and the answer was, "She will never come up again."

"But if she was to ask pardon, and promise never to do it again?"

"She won't ask pardon," they said.

"But I want her to do it," said the little girl who refused to be comforted. "I will give my doll's house if she may only come up again, it is so dreadful for poor Inger."

These words reached down into Inger's heart, and they seemed to do her good. It was the first time that anyone said "Poor Inger," without adding anything about her misdeeds. A little innocent child was weeping and praying for her, and it made her feel quite odd: she would have liked to cry herself, but she could not shed a tear, and this was a further torment.

As the years passed above, so they went on below without any change: she seldom heard sounds from above, and she was less talked about. But one day she was aware of a sigh. "Inger, Inger, what a grief you have been to me, but I always knew you would." It was her mother who was dying. Occasionally she heard her name mentioned by her old employers, and the gentlest words her mistress used were, "Shall I ever see you again, Inger? One never knows whither one may go!"

But Inger knew very well that her good kindly mistress could never come to the place where she was.

Again a long bitter period passed. Then Inger again heard her name pronounced, and saw above her head what seemed to be two bright stars; they

were in fact two kind eyes which were closing on earth. So many years had gone by since the little girl had cried so bitterly at the story of "Poor Inger," that the child had grown to be an old woman whom the Lord was now calling to Himself. In the last hour when one's whole life comes back to one, she remembered how as a little child she had wept bitter tears at the story of Inger. The impression was so clear to the old woman in the hour of death, that she exclaimed aloud, "Oh, Lord, may I not, like Inger, have trodden on Thy blessed gifts without thinking; and may I not also have nourished pride in my heart, but in Thy mercy Thou didst not let me fall! Forsake me not now in my last hour!"

The old woman's eyes closed, and the eyes of her soul were opened to see the hidden things, and as Inger had been so vividly present in her last thoughts, she saw now how deep she had sunk; and at the sight she burst into tears. Then she stood in the Kingdom of Heaven, as a child, weeping for poor Inger. Her tears and prayers echoed into the hollow, empty shell which surrounded the imprisoned, tortured soul, and it was quite overwhelmed by all this unexpected love from above. An angel of God weeping over her! Why was this vouchsafed to her? The tortured soul recalled every earthly action it had ever performed, and at last it melted into tears, in a way Inger had never

done. She was filled with grief for herself; it seemed as though the gate of mercy could never be opened to her.

But as in humble contrition she acknowledged this, a ray of light shone into the gulf of destruction. The strength of the ray was far greater than that of the sunbeam which melts the snow-man built by boys in the garden; and sooner, much sooner, than a snowflake melts on the warm lips of a child, did Inger's stony form dissolve before it, and a little bird with lightning speed winged its way to the upper world. It was terribly shy and afraid of everything. It was ashamed of itself and afraid to meet the eye of any living being, so it hastily sought shelter in a chink in the wall. There it cowered, shuddering in every limb; it could not utter a sound for it had no voice. It sat for a long time before it could survey calmly all the wonders around.

Yes, they were wonders indeed, the air was so sweet and fresh, the moon shone so brightly, the trees and bushes were so fragrant; and then the comfort of it all, its feathers were so clean and dainty. How all creation spoke of love and beauty! The bird would gladly have sung aloud all these thoughts stirring in its breast, but it had not the power. Gladly would it have caroled as do the cuckoos and nightingales in summer.

The good God who hears the voiceless hymn of

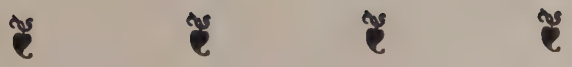
praise even of a worm, was also aware of this psalm of thanksgiving trembling in the breast of the bird, as the psalms of David echoed in his heart before they shaped themselves into words and melody. These thoughts, and these voiceless songs grew, and swelled for weeks.

Then came the holy Christmas Feast. The peasants raised a pole against a wall, and tied a sheaf of oats on to the top, so that the little birds might have a good meal on the happy Christmas day.

The sun rose bright and shone upon the sheaf of oats, and the twittering birds surrounded the pole. Then from the chink in the wall came a feeble tweet-tweet; the swelling thoughts of the bird had found a voice, and this faint twitter was its hymn of praise. The thought of a good deed was awakened, and the bird flew out of its hiding-place; in the Kingdom of Heaven this bird was well-known.

It was a very hard winter, and all the water had thick ice over it. The birds and wild creatures had great difficulty in finding food. The little bird flew along the highways finding here and there in the tracks of the sledges a grain of corn. At the baiting places it also found a few morsels of bread, of which it would only eat a crumb; it gave the rest to the other starving sparrows which it called up. Then it flew into the towns and peeped about.

Wherever a loving hand had strewn bread crumbs for the birds, it only ate one crumb and gave the rest away.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many crumbs of bread, that they equaled in weight the whole loaf which little Inger had stepped upon to keep her shoes clean. When the last crumbs were found and given away, the bird's gray wings became white and spread themselves wide.

"A tern is flying away over the sea," said the children who saw the white bird. Now it dived into the sea, and now it soared up into the bright sunshine. It gleamed so brightly that it was not possible to see what became of it; they said it flew right into the sun.